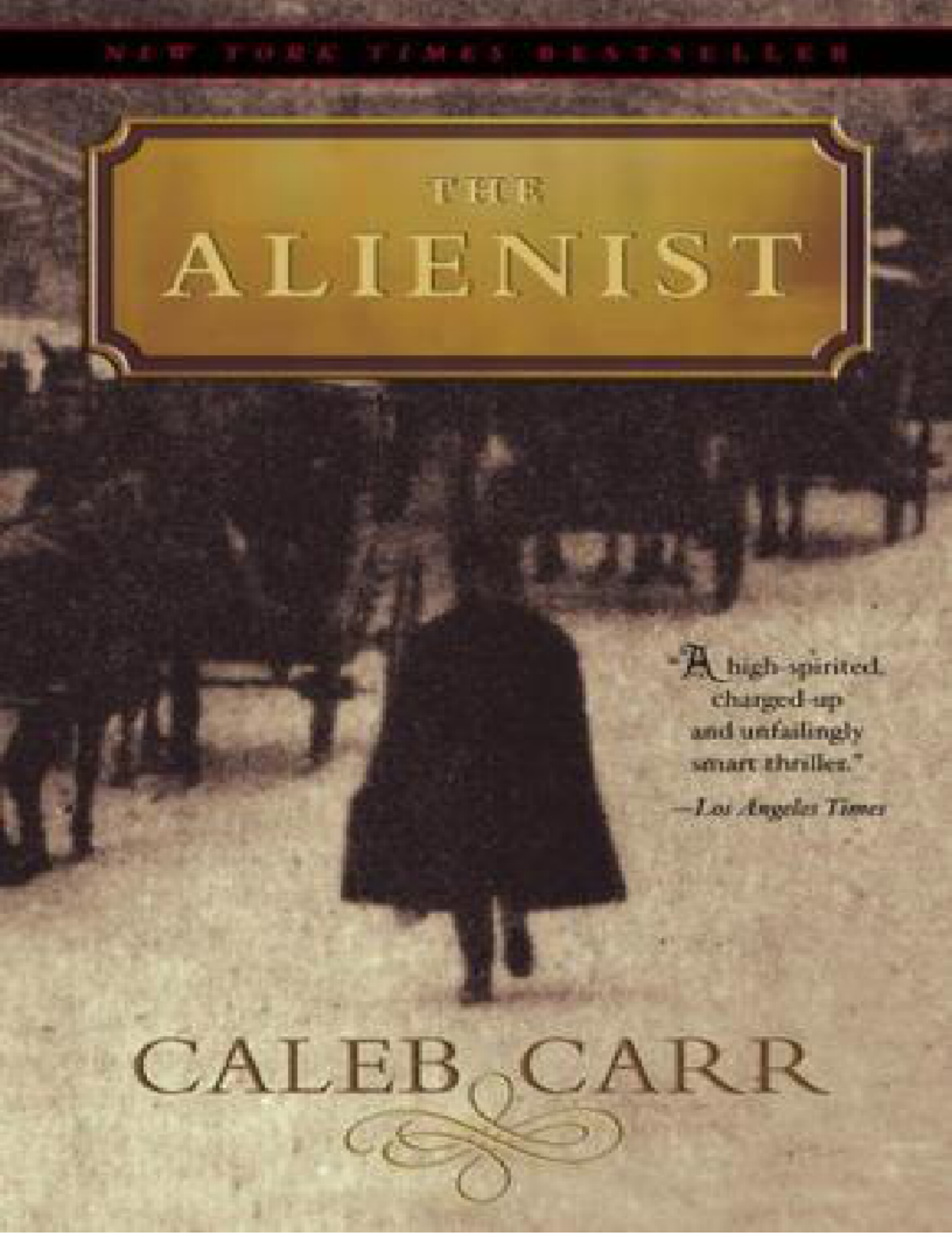
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE ALIENIST



"A high-spirited, charged-up and unfailingly smart thriller."

—*Los Angeles Times*

CALEB CARR

CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE

DEDICATION

NOTE

PART I

CHAPTER 1

CHAPTER 2

CHAPTER 3

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER 7

CHAPTER 8

CHAPTER 9

CHAPTER 10

CHAPTER 11

CHAPTER 12

CHAPTER 13

PART II

CHAPTER 14

CHAPTER 15

CHAPTER 16

CHAPTER 17

CHAPTER 18

CHAPTER 19

CHAPTER 20

CHAPTER 21

CHAPTER 22

CHAPTER 23

CHAPTER 24

CHAPTER 25

CHAPTER 26

CHAPTER 27

CHAPTER 28

CHAPTER 29

PART III

CHAPTER 30

CHAPTER 31

CHAPTER 32

CHAPTER 33

CHAPTER 34

CHAPTER 35

CHAPTER 36

CHAPTER 37

CHAPTER 38

CHAPTER 39

CHAPTER 40

CHAPTER 41

CHAPTER 42

CHAPTER 43

CHAPTER 44

CHAPTER 45

CHAPTER 46

CHAPTER 47

AFTERWORD TO THE NEW EDITION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ALSO BY CALEB CARR

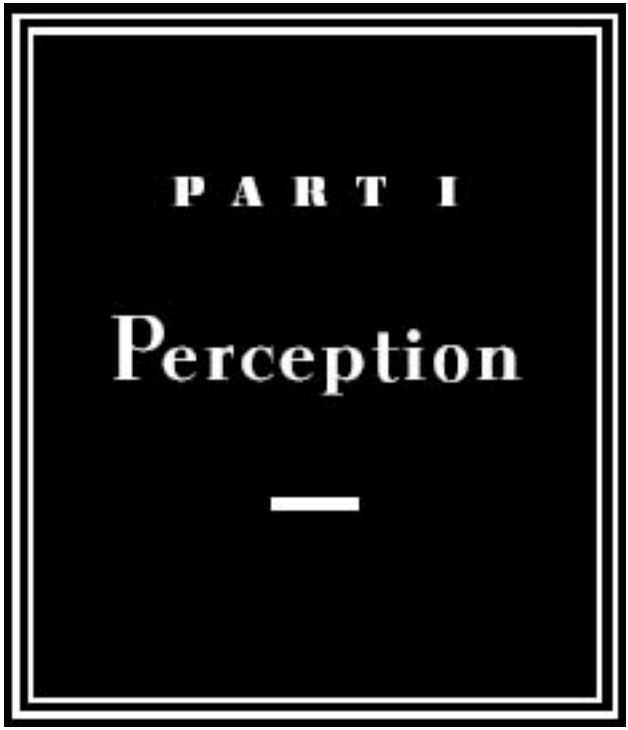
PRAISE FOR THE ALIENIST

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This edition is dedicated to
Those Readers Who Made It Possible
and to the memory of
Dr. David Abrahamsen

NOTE

Prior to the twentieth century, persons suffering from mental illness were thought to be “alienated,” not only from the rest of society but from their own true natures. Those experts who studied mental pathologies were therefore known as *alienists*.



Whilst part of what we perceive comes through our senses from the object before us, another part (and it may be the larger part) always comes out of our own mind.

William James,
The Principles of Psychology

These bloody thoughts, from what are they born?

Piave,
from Verdi's Macbeth

CHAPTER 1

January 8th, 1919

Theodore is in the ground.

The words as I write them make as little sense as did the sight of his coffin descending into a patch of sandy soil near Sagamore Hill, the place he loved more than any other on earth. As I stood there this afternoon, in the cold January wind that blew off Long Island Sound, I thought to myself: Of course it's a joke. Of course he'll burst the lid open, blind us all with that ridiculous grin and split our ears with a high-pitched bark of laughter. Then he'll exclaim that there's work to do—"action to get!"—and we'll all be martialed to the task of protecting some obscure species of newt from the ravages of a predatory industrial giant bent on planting a fetid factory on the little amphibian's breeding ground. I was not alone in such fantasies; everyone at the funeral expected something of the kind, it was plain on their faces. All reports indicate that most of the country and much of the world feel the same way. The notion of Theodore Roosevelt being gone is that—unacceptable.

In truth, he'd been fading for longer than anyone wanted to admit, really since his son Quentin was killed in the last days of the Great Butchery. Cecil Spring-Rice once droned, in his best British blend of affection and needling, that Roosevelt was throughout his life "about six"; and Herm Hagedorn noted that after Quentin was shot out of the sky in the summer of 1918 "the boy in Theodore died." I dined with Laszlo Kreizler at Delmonico's tonight, and mentioned Hagedorn's comment to him. For the remaining two courses of my meal I was treated to a long, typically passionate explanation of why Quentin's

death was more than simply heartbreaking for Theodore: he had felt profound guilt, too, guilt at having so instilled his philosophy of "the strenuous life" in all his children that they often placed themselves deliberately in harm's way, knowing it would delight their beloved father. Grief was almost unbearable to Theodore, I'd always known that; whenever he had to come to grips with the death of someone close, it seemed he might not survive the struggle. But it wasn't until tonight, while listening to Kreizler, that I understood the extent to which moral uncertainty was also intolerable to the twenty-sixth president, who sometimes seemed to think himself Justice personified.

Kreizler…He didn't want to attend the funeral, though Edith Roosevelt would have liked him to. She has always been truly partial to the man she calls "the enigma," the brilliant doctor whose studies of the human mind have disturbed so many people so profoundly over the last forty years. Kreizler wrote Edith a note explaining that he did not much like the idea of a world without Theodore, and, being as he's now sixty-four and has spent his life staring ugly realities full in the face, he thinks he'll just indulge himself and ignore the fact of his friend's passing. Edith told me today that reading Kreizler's note moved her to tears, because she realized that Theodore's boundless affection and enthusiasm—which revolted so many cynics and was, I'm obliged to say in the interests of journalistic integrity, sometimes difficult even for friends to tolerate—had been strong enough to touch a man whose remove from most of human society seemed to almost everyone else unbridgeable.

Some of the boys from the *Times* wanted me to come to a memorial dinner tonight, but a quiet evening with Kreizler seemed much the more appropriate thing. It wasn't out of nostalgia for any shared boyhood in New York that we raised our glasses, because Laszlo and Theodore didn't actually meet until Harvard. No, Kreizler and I were fixing our hearts on the spring of 1896—nearly a quarter-century ago! —and on a series of events that still seems too bizarre to have occurred even in this city. By the end of our dessert and Madeira (and how poignant to have a memorial meal in Delmonico's, good old Del's, now on its way out like the rest of us, but in those days the bustling scene of some of our most important encounters), the two of us were laughing and shaking our heads, amazed to this day that we were able to get through the ordeal with our skins; and still saddened, as I could see in Kreizler's face and feel in my own chest, by the thought of those who didn't.

There's no simple way to describe it. I could say that in retrospect it seems that all three of our lives, and those of many others, led

inevitably and fatefully to that one experience; but then I'd be broaching the subject of psychological determinism and questioning man's free will—reopening, in other words, the philosophical conundrum that wove irrepressibly in and out of the nightmarish proceedings, like the only hummable tune in a difficult opera. Or I could say that, during the course of those months, Roosevelt, Kreizler, and I, assisted by some of the best people I've ever known, set out on the trail of a murderous monster and ended up coming face-to-face with a frightened child; but that would be deliberately vague, too full of the "ambiguity" that seems to fascinate current novelists and which has kept me, lately, out of the bookstores and in the picture houses. No, there's only one way to do it, and that's to tell the whole thing, going back to that first grisly night and that first butchered body; back even further, in fact, to our days with Professor James at Harvard. Yes, to dredge it all up and put it finally before the public—that's the way.

The public may not like it; in fact, it's been concern about public reaction that's forced us to keep our secret for so many years. Even the majority of Theodore's obituaries made no reference to the event. In listing his achievements as president of the Board of Commissioners of New York City's Police Department from 1895 to 1897, only the *Herald*—which goes virtually unread these days—tacked on uncomfortably, "and of course, the solution to the ghastly murders of 1896, which so appalled the city." Yet Theodore never claimed credit for that solution. True, he had been open-minded enough, despite his own qualms, to put the investigation in the hands of a man who *could* solve the puzzle. But privately he always acknowledged that man to be Kreizler.

He could scarcely have done so publicly. Theodore knew that the American people were not ready to believe him, or even to hear the details of the assertion. I wonder if they are now. Kreizler doubts it. I told him I intended to write the story, and he gave me one of his sardonic chuckles and said that it would only frighten and repel people, nothing more. The country, he declared tonight, really hasn't changed much since 1896, for all the work of people like Theodore, and Jake Riis and Lincoln Steffens, and the many other men and women of their ilk. We're all still running, according to Kreizler—in our private moments we Americans are running just as fast and fearfully as we were then, running away from the darkness we know to lie behind so many apparently tranquil household doors, away from the nightmares that continue to be injected into children's skulls by people whom Nature tells them they should love and trust, running ever faster and in ever greater numbers toward those potions,

powders, priests, and philosophies that promise to obliterate such fears and nightmares, and ask in return only slavish devotion. Can he truly be right…?

But I wax ambiguous. To the beginning, then!

CHAPTER 2

An ungodly pummeling on the door of my grandmother's house at 19 Washington Square North brought first the maid and then my grandmother herself to the doorways of their bedrooms at two o'clock on the morning of March 3, 1896. I lay in bed in that no-longer-drunk yet not-quite-sober state which is usually softened by sleep, knowing that whoever was at the door probably had business with me rather than my grandmother. I burrowed into my linen-cased pillows, hoping that he'd just give up and go away.

"Mrs. Moore!" I heard the maid call. "It's a fearful racket—shall I answer it, then?"

"You shall not," my grandmother replied, in her well-clipped, stern voice. "Wake my grandson, Harriet. Doubtless he's forgotten a gambling debt!"

I then heard footsteps heading toward my room and decided I'd better get ready. Since the demise of my engagement to Miss Julia Pratt of Washington some two years earlier, I'd been staying with my grandmother, and during that time the old girl had become steadily more skeptical about the ways in which I spent my off-hours. I had repeatedly explained that, as a police reporter for *The New York Times,* I was required to visit many of the city's seamier districts and houses and consort with some less than savory characters; but she remembered my youth too well to accept that admittedly strained story. My home-coming deportment on the average evening generally reinforced her suspicion that it was state of mind, not professional obligation, that drew me to the dance halls and gaming tables of the Tenderloin every night; and I realized, having caught the gambling remark just made to Harriet, that it was now crucial to project the image of a sober man with serious concerns. I shot into a black

Chinese robe, forced my short hair down on my head, and opened the door loftily just as Harriet reached it.

"Ah, Harriet," I said calmly, one hand inside the robe. "No need for alarm. I was just reviewing some notes for a story, and found I needed some materials from the office. Doubtless that's the boy with them now."

"John!" my grandmother blared as Harriet nodded in confusion. "Is that you?"

"No, Grandmother," I said, trotting down the thick Persian carpet on the stairs. "It's Dr. Holmes." Dr. H. H. Holmes was an unspeakably sadistic murderer and confidence man who was at that moment waiting to be hanged in Philadelphia. The possibility that he might escape before his appointment with the executioner and then journey to New York to do my grandmother in was, for some inexplicable reason, her greatest nightmare. I arrived at the door of her room and gave her a kiss on the cheek, which she accepted without a smile, though it pleased her.

"Don't be insolent, John. It's your least attractive quality. And don't think your handsome charms will make me any less irritated." The pounding on the door started again, followed by a boy's voice calling my name. My grandmother's frown deepened. "Who in blazes is that and what in blazes does he want?"

"I believe it's a boy from the office," I said, maintaining the lie but myself perturbed about the identity of the young man who was taking the front door to such stern task.

"The office?" my grandmother said, not believing a word of it. "All right, then, answer it."

I went quickly but cautiously to the bottom of the staircase, where I realized that in fact I knew the voice that was calling for me but couldn't identify it precisely. Nor was I reassured by the fact that it was a young voice—some of the most vicious thieves and killers I'd encountered in the New York of 1896 were mere striplings.

"Mr. Moore!" The young man pleaded again, adding a few healthy kicks to his knocks. "I must talk to Mr. John Schuyler Moore!"

I stood on the black and white marble floor of the vestibule. "Who's there?" I said, one hand on the lock of the door.

"It's me, sir! Stevie, sir!"

I breathed a slight sigh of relief and unlocked the heavy wooden portal. Outside, standing in the dim light of an overhead gas lamp—the only one in the house that my grandmother had refused to have replaced with an electric bulb—was Stevie Taggert, "the Stevepipe," as he was known. In his first eleven years Stevie had risen to become the bane of fifteen police precincts; but he'd then been reformed by, and was now a driver and general errand boy for, the eminent physician and alienist, my good friend Dr. Laszlo Kreizler. Stevie leaned against one of the white columns outside the door and tried to catch his breath—something had clearly terrified the lad.

"Stevie!" I said, seeing that his long sheet of straight brown hair was matted with sweat. "What's happened?" Looking beyond him I saw Kreizler's small Canadian calash. The cover of the black carriage was folded down, and the rig was drawn by a matching gelding called Frederick. The animal was, like Stevie, bathed in sweat, which steamed in the early March air. "Is Dr. Kreizler with you?"

"The doctor says you're to come with me!" Stevie answered in a rush, his breath back. "Right away!"

"But where? It's two in the morning—"

"Right away!" He was obviously in no condition to explain, so I told him to wait while I put on some clothes. As I did so, my grandmother shouted through my bedroom door that whatever "that peculiar Dr. Kreizler" and I were up to at two in the morning she was sure it was not respectable. Ignoring her as best I could, I got back outside, pulling my tweed coat close as I jumped into the carriage.

I didn't even have time to sit before Stevie lashed at Frederick with a long whip. Falling back into the dark maroon leather of the seat, I thought to upbraid the boy, but again the look of fear in his face struck me. I braced myself as the carriage careened at a somewhat alarming pace over the cobblestones of Washington Square. The shaking and jostling eased only marginally as we turned onto the long, wide slabs of Russ pavement on Broadway. We were heading downtown, downtown and east, into that quarter of Manhattan where Laszlo Kreizler plied his trade and where life became, the further one progressed into the area, ever cheaper and more sordid: the Lower East Side.

For a moment I thought that perhaps something had happened to

Laszlo. Certainly that would have accounted for the fretful way in which Stevie whipped and drove Frederick, an animal I knew him at most times to treat with complete kindness. Kreizler was the first human being who'd ever been able to get more than a bite or a punch out of Stevie, and he was certainly the only reason the young fellow wasn't still in that Randalls Island establishment so euphemistically known as the "Boys' House of Refuge." Besides being, as the Police Department had put it, "a thief, pickpocket, drunkard, nicotine fiend, feeler"—the member of a banco team that lures dupes to the site of the game—"and congenitally destructive menace," all by the time he was ten, Stevie had attacked and badly maimed one of the guards on Randalls Island, who he claimed had tried to assault him. ("Assault," in the newspaper language of a quarter-century ago, almost invariably meaning rape.) Because the guard had a wife and family, the boy's honesty, and finally his sanity, had been questioned—which was when Kreizler, as one of the foremost experts of the day in forensic psychiatry, had made his entrance. At Stevie's sanity hearing Kreizler painted a masterful picture of the boy's life on the streets since the age of three, when he had been abandoned by his mother, who put an opium habit above caring for her son and finally became the mistress of a Chinese purveyor of the drug. The judge had been impressed by Kreizler's speech, and skeptical of the injured guard's testimony; but he would only agree to release Stevie when Kreizler offered to take the boy in and vouched for his future conduct. I thought Laszlo quite crazy, at the time; but there was no doubting that in just over a year Stevie had become a very different youth. And, like almost everyone who worked for Laszlo, the boy was devoted to his patron, despite that peculiar quality of emotional distance that made Kreizler so perplexing to many who knew him.

"Stevie," I called out over the din of the carriage wheels hitting the worn edges of the granite Russ slabs, "where *is* Dr. Kreizler? Is he all right?"

"At the Institute!" Stevie answered, his blue eyes wide. Laszlo's work was based in the Kreizler Institute for Children, a combination of school and research center that he had founded during the eighties. I was about to ask what he was doing there at such an hour but swallowed the query when we charged headlong through the still-busy intersection of Broadway and Houston Street. Here, it was once sagely remarked, you could fire a shotgun in any direction without hitting an honest man; Stevie contented himself with sending drunkards, faro dealers, morphine and cocaine addicts, prostitutes, their sailor marks, and simple vagrants flying for the safety of the sidewalk. From that sanctuary most of them called curses after us.

“Then are we going to the Institute, too?” I shouted. But Stevie only reined the horse sharply left at Spring Street, where we disrupted business outside two or three concert saloons, houses of assignation where prostitutes who passed themselves off as dancers made arrangements for later meetings at cheap hotels with hapless fools who were generally from out of town. From Spring Stevie made his way to Delancey Street—which was in the midst of being widened to accommodate the expected traffic of the new Williamsburg Bridge, whose construction had only recently begun—and then we flew on past several darkened theaters. Echoing down from each passing side street I could hear the desperate, demented sounds of the dives: filthy holes that sold rotgut liquor laced with everything from benzine to camphor for a nickel a glass atop a dirty plank that passed for a bar. Stevie did not slacken the pace—we were headed, it seemed, for the very edge of the island.

I made one last attempt at communication: “Aren’t we going to the Institute?!”

Stevie shook his head in reply, then cracked the long horsewhip again. I shrugged, sitting back to hang on to the sides of the carriage and wonder what could have frightened this boy—who in his short life had seen many of the horrors that New York had to offer—so very badly.

Delancey Street carried us past the shuttered stalls of fruit and clothing merchants and on into one of the worst of the Lower East Side’s tenement- and shanty-strewn ghettos, the neighborhood near the waterfront just above Corlears Hook. A vast, maudlin sea of small shacks and shoddy new tenements stretched away to either side of us. The area was a stewpot of different immigrant cultures and languages, the Irish predominating to the south of Delancey Street and the Hungarians farther north, near Houston. An occasional church of some denomination or other was visible among the rows upon rows of dismal residences, which even on this crisp morning were draped with lines of laundry. Some pieces of clothing and bedding, frozen almost solid, twisted in the wind stiffly at what might have seemed unnatural angles; but in truth, nothing in such a place—where furtive souls scurried from darkened doorways to blackened alleys wrapped in what were often little more than rags, their feet bare to the frozen horse manure, urine, and soot that coated the streets—could truly be called unnatural. We were in a neighborhood that knew little of laws, man-made or otherwise, a neighborhood that gave joy to visitors and residents only when they were allowed to view its recession in the distance after making their escape.

Near the end of Delancey Street, the smells of sea and fresh water, along with the stench of refuse that those who lived near the waterfront simply dumped off the edge of Manhattan every day, mingled to produce the distinctive aroma of that tidal pool we call the East River. A large structure soon slanted up before us: the ramp approach to the nascent Williamsburg Bridge. Without pausing, and much to my dismay, Stevie crashed onto the boarded roadway, the horse's hooves and carriage wheels clattering far more loudly against wood than they had against stone.

An elaborate maze of steel supports below the roadway bore us dozens of feet up into the night air. As I wondered what our destination could possibly be—for the towers of the bridge were nothing like completed, and the structure's opening was years away—I began to make out what looked like the walls of a large Chinese temple suddenly looming ahead. Composed of huge granite blocks and crowned by two squat watchtowers, each of which was ringed by a delicate steel walkway, this peculiar edifice was the Manhattan-side anchor of the bridge, the structure that would eventually hold one set of ends of the enormous steel suspension cables that would support the central span. In a way, though, my impression of it as a temple was not far off the mark: like the Brooklyn Bridge, whose Gothic arches I could see silhouetted against the night sky to the south, this new roadway over the East River was a place where many workers' lives had been sacrificed to the faith of Engineering, which in the past fifteen years had produced towering marvels all over Manhattan. What I did not know was that the blood sacrifice that had been made atop the western anchor of the Williamsburg Bridge on that particular night was of a very different nature.

Near the entrance to the watchtowers atop the anchor, standing under the flimsy light of a few electric bulbs and bearing portable lanterns, were several patrolmen whose small brass insignia marked them as coming from the Thirteenth Precinct (we had passed the station house moments before on Delancey Street). With them was a sergeant from the Fifteenth, a fact that immediately struck me as odd—in two years of covering the criminal beat for the *Times,* not to mention a childhood in New York, I'd learned that each of the city's police precincts guarded its terrain jealously. (Indeed, at mid-century the various police factions had openly warred with each other.) For the Thirteenth to have summoned a man from the Fifteenth indicated that something significant was going on.

Stevie finally reined the gelding up near this group of blue greatcoats, then leapt from his seat and took the hard-breathing horse

by the bit, leading him to the side of the roadway near an enormous pile of construction materials and tools. The boy eyed the cops with familiar distrust. The sergeant from the Fifteenth Precinct, a tall Irishman whose pasty face was notable only because he did not sport the broad mustache so common to his profession, stepped forward and studied Stevie with a threatening smile.

"That's little Stevie Taggert, ain't it?" he said, speaking with a pronounced brogue. "You don't suppose the commissioner's called me all this way to box your ears for ya, do ya, Stevie, ya little shit?"

I stepped down from the carriage and approached Stevie, who shot the sergeant a sullen glance. "Pay no mind, Stevie," I said, as sympathetically as possible. "Stupidity goes with the leather helmet." The boy smiled a bit. "But I wouldn't mind your telling me what I'm doing here."

Stevie nodded to the northern watchtower, then pulled a battered cigarette out of his pocket. "Up there. The doctor says you're to go up."

I started for the doorway in the granite wall, but Stevie stayed by the horse. "You're not coming?"

The boy shuddered and turned away, lighting the cigarette. "I seen it once. And if I never see such again I'll be done right. When you're ready to get back home, Mr. Moore, I'll be right here. Doctor's instructions."

I felt increased apprehension as I turned and headed for the doorway, where I was stopped by the arm of the police sergeant. "And who might you be, with the young Stevepipe driving you around past all respectable hours? This is a crime scene, y'know." I gave the man my name and occupation, at which he grinned and showed me an impressive gold tooth. "Ah, a gentleman of the press—and the *Times,* no less! Well, Mr. Moore, I've just arrived myself. Urgent call, apparently no other man they could trust. Spell it F-l-y-n-n, sir, if you will, and don't go labeling me no roundsman. Full sergeant. Come on, we'll head up together. Mind you behave, young Stevie, or I'll have you back on Randalls Island faster'n spit!"

Stevie turned back to the horse. "Why don't you go chase yourself," the boy mumbled, just loud enough for the sergeant to hear. Flynn spun with a look of lethal anger, but, remembering my presence, checked himself. "Incorrigible, that one, Mr. Moore. Can't imagine

what a man like you's doing in his presence. Need him as a contact with the underworld, no doubt. Up we go, sir, and mind, it's dark as the pit in here!"

So it was. I stumbled and tripped my way up a rough flight of stairs, at the top of which I could make out the form of another leatherhead. The cop—a roundsman from the Thirteenth Precinct—turned on our approach and then called to someone else:

"It's Flynn, sir. He's here."

We came out of the stairs into a small room littered with sawhorses, planks of wood, buckets of rivets, and bits of metal and wiring. Wide windows gave a full view of the horizon in every direction—the city behind us, the river and the partially completed towers of the bridge before us. A doorway led out onto the walkway that ran around the tower. Near the doorway stood a slit-eyed, bearded sergeant of detectives named Patrick Connor, whom I recognized from my visits to Police Headquarters on Mulberry Street. Next to him, looking out over the river with his hands clasped behind his back, rocking on the balls of his feet, was a much more familiar figure: Theodore.

"Sergeant Flynn," Roosevelt said without turning. "It's ghastly work that has prompted our call, I'm afraid. Ghastly."

My discomfort suddenly heightened when Theodore spun to face us. There was nothing unusual in his appearance: an expensive, slightly dandy checked suit of the kind that he fancied in those days; the spectacles that were, like the eyes behind them, too small for his tough, square head; the broad mustache bristling below the wide nose. Yet his visage was excessively odd, nonetheless. Then it occurred to me: his teeth. His numerous, usually snapping teeth—they were nowhere in sight. His jaws were clamped shut in what seemed passionate anger, or remorse. Something had shaken Roosevelt badly.

His dismay seemed to grow when he saw me. "What—Moore! What in thunder are you doing here?"

"I'm glad to see you, too, Roosevelt," I managed through my nervousness, extending a hand.

He accepted it, though for once he didn't loosen my arm from its socket. "What—oh, I am sorry, Moore. I—delighted to see you, of course, delighted. But who told you—?"

"Told me what? I was abducted and brought here by Kreizler's boy.

On his orders, without so much as a word of explanation."

"Kreizler!" Theodore murmured in soft urgency, glancing out the window with a confounded and even fearful look that was not at all typical of him. "Yes, Kreizler's been here."

"Been? Do you mean he's gone?"

"Before I arrived. He left a note. And a report." Theodore revealed a piece of paper clutched in his left hand. "A preliminary one, at any rate. He was the first doctor they could find. Although it was quite hopeless…"

I took the man by the shoulder. "Roosevelt. What is it?"

"To be sure, Commissioner, I wouldn't mind knowing meself," Sergeant Flynn added, with quaint obsequiousness that was repellant. "We get little enough sleep at the Fifteenth, and I'd just as soon—"

"Very well," Theodore said, steeling himself. "How are your stomachs, gentlemen?"

I said nothing, and Flynn made some absurd joke about the wide range of grisly sights he'd encountered in his life; but Theodore's eyes were all hard business. He indicated the door to the outer walkway. Detective Sergeant Connor stepped aside and then Flynn led the way out.

My first thought on emerging, despite my apprehension, was that the view from the walkway was even more extraordinary than that from the tower windows. Across the water lay Williamsburg, once a peaceful country town but now rapidly becoming a bustling part of the metropolis that was destined, within months, to officially evolve into Greater New York. To the south, again, the Brooklyn Bridge; in the southwestern distance the new towers of Printing House Square, and below us the churning, black waters of the river—

And then I saw it.

CHAPTER 3

Odd, how long it took my mind to make any sense of the image. Or perhaps not; there was so much so very wrong, so very out of place, so…distorted. How could I have expected myself to grasp it quickly?

On the walkway was the body of a young person. I say "person" because, though the physical attributes were those of an adolescent boy, the clothes (little more than a chemise that was missing a sleeve) and facial paint were those of a girl. Or, rather, of a woman, and a woman of dubious repute at that. The unfortunate creature's wrists were trussed behind the back, and the legs were bent in a kneeling position that pressed the face to the steel of the walkway. There was no sign of any pants or shoes, just one sock hanging pathetically from a foot. But what had been done to the body…

The face did not seem heavily beaten or bruised—the paint and powder were still intact—but where once there had been eyes there were now only bloody, cavernous sockets. A puzzling piece of flesh protruded from the mouth. A wide gash stretched across the throat, though there was little blood near the opening. Large cuts crisscrossed the abdomen, revealing the mass of the inner organs. The right hand had been chopped neatly off. At the groin there was another gaping wound, one that explained the mouth—the genitals had been cut away and stuffed between the jaws. The buttocks, too, had been shorn off, in what appeared large…one could only call them carving strokes.

In the minute or two that it took me to note all these details the vista around me faded into a sea of indistinguishable blackness, and what I thought was the churning progress of a ship turned out to be my own blood in my ears. With the sudden realization that I might be sick, I spun to grasp the railing of the walkway and hung my head out over the water.

"Commissioner!" Connor called, stepping out of the watchtower. But it was Theodore who got to me first, in a quick bound.

"Easy, now, John," I heard him say, as he supported me with that wiry yet remarkably strong boxer's frame of his. "Breathe deeply."

As I followed his instructions I heard a long, trailing whistle from Flynn, who continued to stare at the body. "Well, now," he said, addressing the corpse without sounding particularly concerned. "Somebody has done for you, young Giorgio-called-Gloria, haven't they? You're a hell of a mess."

"Then you do know the child, Flynn?" Theodore said, leaning me against the wall of the watchtower. Steadiness was returning to my head.

"That I do, Commissioner." Flynn seemed in the dim light to be smiling. "Though it was no child, this one, not if childhood be judged by behavior. Family name Santorelli. Must've been, oh, thirteen years old, or thereabouts. Giorgio, it was called originally, and since it began working out of Paresis Hall, it called itself Gloria."

"'It'?" I said, wiping cold sweat from my forehead with the cuff of my coat. "Why do you call him 'it'?"

Flynn's smile became a grin. "Sure, and what would you call it, Mr. Moore? It warn't no male, not to judge by its antics—but God didn't create it female, teither. They're all its to me, that breed."

Theodore's hands went forcefully to his hips, the fingers curling up into fists—he'd taken the measure of Flynn. "I'm not interested in your philosophical analysis of the situation, Sergeant. Whatever else, the boy was a child and the child has been murdered."

Flynn chuckled and glanced again at the body. "No arguing *that,* sir!"

"Sergeant!" Theodore's voice, always a little too rasping and shrill for his appearance, scratched a little more than usual as he barked at Flynn, who stood up straight. "Not another word out of you, sir, unless it's to answer my questions! Understood?"

Flynn nodded; but the cynical, amused resentment that all longtime officers in the department felt for the commissioner who in just one year had stood Police Headquarters and the whole chain of departmental command on its ear remained evident in the slightest

curl of his upper lip. Theodore could not have missed it.

"Now then," Roosevelt said, his teeth clicking in that peculiar way of theirs, cutting each word out of his mouth. "You say the boy was called Giorgio Santorelli, and that he worked out of Paresis Hall—that's Biff Ellison's establishment on Cooper Square, correct?"

"That'd be the one, Commissioner."

"And where would you guess that Mr. Ellison is at this moment?"

"At this—? Why, in the Hall itself, sir."

"Go there. Tell him I want him at Mulberry Street tomorrow morning."

For the first time, Flynn looked concerned. "Tomorrow—now, begging your pardon, Commissioner, but Mr. Ellison's not the sort of man to take that kind of a summons sweetly."

"Then arrest him," Theodore said, turning away and staring out at Williamsburg.

"Arrest him? Sure, Commissioner, if we arrested every owner of a bar or disorderly house that harbors boy-whores, just because one gets roughed up or even murdered, why, sir, we'd never—"

"Perhaps you would like to tell me the real reason for your resistance," Theodore said, those busy fists of his starting to flex behind his back. He walked right up and put his spectacles in Flynn's face. "Is Mr. Ellison not one of your primary sources of graft?"

Flynn's eyes widened, but he managed to draw himself up haughtily and affect wounded pride. "Mr. Roosevelt, I've been on the force for fifteen years, sir, and I think I know how this city works. You don't go harassing a man like Mr. Ellison just because some little piece of immigrant trash finally gets what's coming to it!"

That was all, and I knew that was all—and it was fortunate for Roosevelt that I did, for had I not shot over at just that moment to grab his arms he would certainly have beaten Flynn into a bloody pulp. It was a struggle, though, to keep hold of those strong arms. "No, Roosevelt, no!" I whispered in his ear. "It's what his kind want, you know that! Attack a man in uniform and they'll have your head, there'll be nothing the mayor can do about it!"

Roosevelt was breathing hard, Flynn was once again smiling, and Detective Sergeant Connor and the roundsman were making no move toward physical intervention. They knew full well that they were precariously positioned at that moment between the powerful wave of municipal reform that had swept into New York with the findings of the Lexow Commission on police corruption a year earlier (of which Roosevelt was a strong exponent) and the perhaps greater power of that same corruption, which had existed for as long as the force and was now quietly biding its time, waiting until the public wearied of the passing fashion of reform and sank back into business as usual.

"A simple choice for you, Flynn," Roosevelt managed, with dignity that was notably unimpaired for a man so full of rage. "Ellison in my office or your badge on my desk. Tomorrow morning."

Flynn gave up the struggle sullenly. "Sure. *Commissioner.*" He spun on his heel and headed back down the watchtower steps, mumbling something about a "damned society boy playing at policeman." One of the cops who had been positioned below the tower then appeared, to say that a coroner's wagon had arrived and was ready to haul the body away. Roosevelt told them to wait a few minutes and then dismissed Connor and the roundsman as well. We were now alone on the walkway, except for the ghoulish remains of what had once been, apparently, another of the many desperately troubled young people who every season were spat up by the dark, miserable tenement ocean that stretched away from us to the west. Forced to use whatever means they could—and Giorgio Santorelli's had been the most basic—to survive on their own, such children were more *completely* on their own than anyone unfamiliar with the New York City ghettos of 1896 could possibly imagine.

"Kreizler estimates that the boy was killed earlier tonight," Theodore said, glancing at the sheet of paper in his hand. "Something about the temperature of the body. So the killer may still be in the area. I have men combing it. There are a few other medical details, and then this message."

He handed the paper to me, and on it I saw scrawled in Kreizler's agitated block hand: "ROOSEVELT: TERRIBLE ERRORS HAVE BEEN MADE. I WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE MORNING, OR FOR LUNCH. WE SHOULD BEGIN—THERE IS A TIMETABLE." I tried for a moment to make sense of it.

"It's fairly tiresome of him to be so cryptic" was the only conclusion I could reach.

Theodore managed a chuckle. “Yes. I thought so, too. But I think I understand, now. It was examining the body that did it. Do you have any idea, Moore, how many people are murdered in New York every year?”

“Not really.” I gave the corpse another curious glance, but jerked my head back around when I saw the cruel way in which the face was pressed to the steel walkway—so that the lower jaw was pushed at a grotesque sidelong angle away from the upper—and the black-red holes that had once been eyes. “If I were to guess I’d say hundreds. Perhaps one or two thousand.”

“So would I,” Roosevelt answered. “But I, too, would only be guessing. Because we don’t even pay attention to most of them. Oh, the force bends every effort if the victim is respectable and well-to-do. But a boy like this, an immigrant who turned to the flesh trade—I’m ashamed to say it, Moore, but there’s no precedent for looking into such a case, as you could see in Flynn’s attitude.” His hands went to his hips again. “But I’m getting tired of it. In these vile neighborhoods husbands and wives kill each other, drunkards and dope fiends murder decent working people, prostitutes are slaughtered and commit suicide by the score, and at most it’s seen as some sort of grimly amusing spectacle by outsiders. That’s bad enough. But when the victims are children like this, and the general reaction is no different than Flynn’s—by God, I get to feeling warlike with my own people! Why, already this year we’ve had three such cases, and not so much as a whisper from the precincts or the detectives.”

“Three?” I asked. “I only know about the girl at Draper’s.” Shang Draper ran a notorious brothel at Sixth Avenue and Twenty-fourth Street, where customers could purchase the favors of children (mostly girls, but the occasional boy as well) between the ages of nine and fourteen. In January a ten-year-old girl had been found beaten to death in one of the brothel’s small paneled rooms.

“Yes, and you only know of *that* one because Draper had been slow with his graft payments,” Roosevelt said. The bitter battle against corruption waged by the current mayor, Colonel William L. Strong, and lieutenants such as Roosevelt had been courageous, but they had not succeeded in eradicating the oldest and most lucrative of police activities: the collection of graft from the operators of saloons, concert halls, disorderly houses, opium dens, and every other palace of vice. “Someone in the Sixteenth Precinct, I still don’t know who, made the most of that story to the press as a method of turning the screws. But the other two victims were boys like this, found in the streets and

therefore useless in trying to pressure their panderers. So the stories went untold…"

His voice faded into the slap of the water below us and the steady rush of the river breeze. "Were they both like this?" I asked, watching Theodore watch the body.

"Virtually. Throats cut. And they'd both been gotten at by the rats and birds, like this one. It didn't make an easy sight."

"Rats and birds?"

"The eyes," Roosevelt answered. "Detective Sergeant Connor puts that down to rats, or carrion pickers. But the rest of this…"

There hadn't been anything in the papers about these other two killings, although there was nothing surprising about that. As Roosevelt had said, murders that appeared insoluble and that occurred among the poor or outcast were barely recorded, much less investigated, by the police; and when the victims were members of a segment of society that was not generally acknowledged to exist, then the chances of public awareness shrank from slim to none. I wondered for a moment what my own editors at the *Times* would have done if I'd suggested running a story about a young boy who made his living painting himself like a female whore and selling his body to grown men (many of them ostensibly respectable men), who was horribly butchered in a dark corner of the city. I would have been lucky to escape with a dismissal; forced internment at the Bloomingdale Asylum would have been the more likely result.

"I haven't spoken to Kreizler in years," Roosevelt mused at length. "Although he sent me a very decent note when"—for a moment his words became awkward—"that is, at a very difficult time."

I understood. Theodore was referring to the death of his first wife, Alice, who had passed away in 1884 after giving birth to their daughter, who bore the same name. His loss that day had been doubly staggering, for his mother had died within hours of his wife. Theodore had dealt with the tragedy typically, sealing off the sad, sacrosanct memory of his bride, and never mentioning her again.

He tried to rouse himself, and turned to me. "Still, the good doctor must have called you here for a reason."

"I'm deuced if I can see it," I replied with a shrug.

"Yes," Theodore said with another affectionate chuckle. "As inscrutable as any Chinaman, our friend Kreizler. And perhaps, like him, I've been among the strange and awful too long, these past months. But I think I may be able to divine his purpose. You see, Moore, I've had to ignore all the other killings like this one, because there's no desire to investigate them in the department. Even if there were, none of our detectives is trained to make sense of such butchery. But this boy, this horrible, bloody mess—justice can only be blind so long. I've a scheme, and I think Kreizler has a scheme—and I think *you're* the one to bring us together."

"Me?"

"Why not? Just as you did at Harvard, when we all met."

"But what am I supposed to do?"

"Bring Kreizler to my office tomorrow. Late morning, as he says. We'll share thoughts and see what can be done. But mind you, be discreet—as far as anyone else is concerned, it's a social reunion of old friends."

"Damn it, Roosevelt, *what* is a social reunion of old friends?"

But I'd lost him to the rapture of a plan. He ignored my plaintive question, took a deep breath, barreled his chest, and appeared far more comfortable than he had to that point. "Action, Moore—we shall respond with action!"

And then he grabbed me around the shoulders in a tight hug, his enthusiasm and moral certainty all back in full force. As for my own sense of certainty, any kind of certainty, I waited in vain for its arrival. All I knew was that I was being drawn into something that involved the two most passionately determined men I'd ever known—and that thought offered me no comfort as we went back downstairs to Kreizler's carriage, leaving the body of the pitiable Santorelli boy alone on that tower, high in the freezing sky that was still untouched by any trace of dawn.

CHAPTER 4

Cold, cutting March rain came with the morning. I rose early to find that Harriet had, mercifully, prepared me a breakfast of strong coffee, toast, and fruit (which she, drawing on the experience of a family full of inebriates, believed essential for anyone who imbibed often). I settled into my grandmother's glass-enclosed nook, overlooking her still-dormant rose garden in the rear yard, and decided to digest the morning edition of the *Times* before trying to telephone the Kreizler Institute. With the rain pattering on the copper roof and glass walls around me, I inhaled the fragrance of the few plants and flowers that my grandmother kept alive year-round and took in the paper, trying to reestablish contact with a world that, in light of the previous evening's events, seemed suddenly and disturbingly removed.

SPAIN IS FULL OF WRATH, I learned; the question of American support for the nationalist rebels in Cuba (the U.S. Congress was considering granting them full belligerent status, and thus effectively recognizing their cause) was continuing to cause the vicious, crumbling regime in Madrid much worry. Boss Tom Platt, the town's cadaverous old Republican mastermind, was assailed by the editors of the *Times* for trying to prostitute the imminent reorganization of the city into a Greater New York—one that would include Brooklyn and Staten Island, as well as Queens, the Bronx, and Manhattan—to his own nefarious purposes. The approaching Democratic and Republican conventions both promised to center around the question of bimetallism, or whether or not America's solid old gold standard should be sullied by the introduction of silver-based currency. Three hundred and eleven black Americans had taken ship for Liberia; and the Italians were rioting because their troops had been badly defeated by Abyssinian tribesmen on the other side of that dark continent.

Momentous as all this no doubt was, it held little interest for a man

in my mood. I turned to lighter matters. There were bicycling elephants at Proctor's Theatre; a troop of Hindu fakirs at Hubert's Fourteenth Street Museum; Max Alvary was a brilliant Tristan at the Academy of Music; and Lillian Russell was *The Goddess of Truth* at Abbey's. Eleanora Duse was "no Bernhardt" in *Camille,* and Otis Skinner in *Hamlet* shared her penchant for weeping too easily and too often. *The Prisoner of Zenda* was in its fourth week at the Lyceum—I had seen it twice and thought for a moment about going again that night. It was a grand escape from the worries of the usual day (not to mention the grim sights of an extraordinary night): castles with watery moats, sword battles, a diverting mystery, and stunning, swooning women…

Yet even as I thought of the play, my eyes wandered to other items. A man on Ninth Street who had once cut his brother's throat while drunk, drank again and shot his mother; there were still no clues in the particularly vicious murder of artist Max Eglau at the Institution for the Improved Instruction of Deaf Mutes; a man named John Mackin, who had killed his wife and mother-in-law and then tried to end his own life by cutting his throat, had recovered from the wound but was now trying to starve himself. The authorities had convinced Mackin to eat by showing him the frightful force-feeding apparatus that would otherwise be used to keep him alive for the executioner…

I threw the paper aside. Taking in a last heavy gulp of sweet black coffee, and then a section of a peach shipped from Georgia, I redoubled my resolve to get to the Lyceum box office. I had just started back for my room to dress when the telephone let out with a loud clang, and I heard my grandmother in her morning room exclaim "Oh, God!" in alarm and anger. The telephone bell did that to her, yet she never entertained any suggestion that it be removed, or at least muffled.

Harriet appeared from the kitchen, her soft, middle-aged features specked with soap bubbles. "It's the telephone, sir," she said, wiping her hands on her apron. "Dr. Kreizler calling."

Pulling my Chinese robe tighter, I headed for the little wooden box near the kitchen and took up the heavy black receiver, putting it to my ear as I placed my other hand on the anchored mouthpiece. "Yes?" I said. "Is that you, Laszlo?"

"Ah, so you're awake, Moore," I heard him say. "Good." The sound was faint, but the manner was, as always, energetic. The words bore the lilt of a European accent: Kreizler had immigrated to the United

States as a child, when his German father, a wealthy publisher and 1848 republican, and Hungarian mother had fled monarchist persecution to begin a somewhat celebrated life in New York as fashionable political exiles. “What time does Roosevelt want us?” he asked, without any thought that Theodore might have refused his suggestion.

“Before lunch!” I said, raising my volume as if to overcome the faintness of his voice.

“Why the devil are you shouting?” Kreizler said. “Before lunch, eh? Excellent. Then we’ve time. You’ve seen the paper? The bit on this man Wolff?”

“No.”

“Read it while you’re dressing, then.”

I glanced at my robe. “How did you know that I—”

“They have him at Bellevue. I’m supposed to assess him, anyway, and we can ask a few additional questions, to determine if he’s connected to our business. Then on to Mulberry Street, a brief stop at the Institute, and lunch at Del’s—squab, I should think, or the pigeon crepinettes. Ranhofer’s poivrade sauce with truffles is superb.”

“But—”

“Cyrus and I will go directly from my house. You’ll have to take a hansom. The appointment’s for nine-thirty—try not to be late, will you, Moore? We mustn’t waste a minute in this affair.”

And then he was gone. I walked back to the nook, picked up the *Times* again, and leafed through it. The article was on page eight:

Henry Wolff had been drinking in the tenement apartment of his neighbor, Conrad Rudesheimer, the night before. The latter’s five-year-old daughter had entered the room, and Wolff proceeded to make some comments that Rudesheimer found unsuitable for the ears of a young girl. The father objected; Wolff pulled a gun and shot the girl in the head, killing her, then fled. He had been captured, several hours later, wandering aimlessly—near the East River. I dropped the paper again, momentarily struck by a premonitory feeling that the events of the previous night atop the bridge tower had been only an overture.

Back in the hallway I ran headlong into my grandmother, her silver

hair perfectly coiffed, her gray and black dress unimpeachably neat, and her gray eyes, which I had inherited, glaring. “John!” she said in surprise, as if ten other men were staying in her house. “Who in the world was on the telephone?”

“Dr. Kreizler, Grandmother,” I said, bounding up the stairs.

“Dr. Kreizler!” she called after me. “Well, dear! I’ve had about enough of that Dr. Kreizler for one day!” As I closed the door of my bedroom and began to dress, I could still hear her: “If you ask me, he’s awfully peculiar! And I don’t put much stock in his being a doctor, either. That Holmes man was a doctor, too!” She stayed in that vein while I washed, shaved, and scrubbed my teeth with Sozodont. It was her way; and for all that it was annoying, to a man who, without recent memory, had lost what he was sure was his only chance at domestic happiness, it was still better than a lonely apartment in a building full of other men who had resigned themselves to solitary lives.

Snatching a gray cap and a black umbrella as I dashed out the front door, I made for Sixth Avenue at a brisk pace. The rain was coming down much harder now, and a particularly stiff wind had begun to blow. When I reached the avenue the force of air suddenly changed directions as it swept under the tracks of the New York Elevated Railroad line, which ran above either side of the street just inside the sidewalks. The shift blasted my umbrella inside out, along with those of several other members of the throng that was hustling under the tracks; and the combined effect of the heightening wind, the rain, and the cold was to make the usually bustling rush hour seem absolute pandemonium. Making for a cab as I struggled with my cumbersome, useless umbrella, I was cut off by a merry young couple who maneuvered me out of their way with no great finesse and clambered quickly into my hansom. I swore loudly against their progeny and shook the dead umbrella at them, prompting the woman to scream in fright and the man to fix an anxious eye on me and tell me I was mad —all of which, considering my destination, gave me a good chuckle and made the wet wait for another hansom much easier. When one came around the corner of Washington Place I did not wait for it to stop, but leapt in, shut the doors around my legs, and hollered to the driver to get me to the Insane Pavilion at Bellevue: not the kind of order any cabbie wants to hear. The look of dismay on his face as we drove off gave me another little laugh, so that by the time we hit Fourteenth Street I didn’t even mind the feel of wet tweed against my legs.

With the perversity of the typical New York City cabman, my driver —the collar of his raincoat turned up and his top hat encased in a thin rubber sheath—decided to battle his way through the shopping district along Sixth Avenue above Fourteenth Street before turning east. We had slowly passed most of the big department stores—O'Neill's, Adams & Company, Simpson-Crawford—before I rapped on the roof of the cab with my first and assured my man that I did need to get to Bellevue *this* morning. With a rude jerk we spun right at Twenty-third, and then plowed through the thoroughly unregulated intersection of that street with Fifth Avenue and Broadway. Passing the squat bulk of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where Boss Platt made his headquarters and was probably putting the finishing touches to the Greater New York scheme at that very moment, we turned up along the eastern edge of Madison Square Park to Twenty-sixth, then changed directions in front of the Italianate arcades and towers of Madison Square Garden to head east once more. The square, solemn, red-brick buildings of Bellevue appeared on the horizon, and in just a few more minutes we crossed First Avenue and pulled up behind a large black ambulance on the Twenty-sixth Street side of the hospital grounds, near the entrance to the Insane Pavilion. I paid my cabbie off and headed in.

The Pavilion was a simple building, long and rectangular. A small, uninviting vestibule greeted visitors and internees, and beyond this, through the first of many iron doors, was a wide corridor running down the center of the building. Twenty-four "rooms"—really cells—opened off of the corridor, and separating these cells into two wards, female and male, were two more sliding, studded iron doors at the corridor's midway point. The Pavilion was used for observation and evaluation, primarily of persons who had committed violent acts. Once their sanity (or lack of it) had been determined and official reports were received, the internees were shipped out to other, even less inviting institutions.

As soon as I was inside the vestibule I heard the usual shouts and howls—some coherent protests, some simply wails of madness and despair—coming from the cells beyond. At the same instant I spotted Kreizler; odd, how strongly the sight of him has always been associated, in my mind, with such sounds. As usual, his suit and coat were black, and as often he was reading the music notices in the *Times*. His black eyes, so much like a large bird's, flitted about the paper as he shifted from one foot to the other in sudden, quick movements. He held the *Times* in his right hand, and his left arm, underdeveloped as the result of a childhood injury, was pulled in close to his body. The left hand occasionally rose to swipe at his neatly

trimmed mustache and the small patch of beard under his lower lip. His dark hair, cut far too long to meet the fashion of the day, and swept back on his head, was moist, for he always went hatless; and this, along with the bobbing of his face at the pages before him, only increased the impression of some hungry, restless hawk determined to wring satisfaction from the worrisome world around him.

Standing next to Kreizler was the enormous Cyrus Montrose, Laszlo's valet, occasional driver, effective bodyguard, and alter ego. Like most of Kreizler's employees, Cyrus was a former patient, one who made me more than a little nervous, despite his apparently controlled manner and appearance. That morning he was dressed in gray pants and a tightly buttoned brown jacket, and his broad, black features did not seem even to register my approach. But as I came closer he tapped Kreizler on the arm and pointed my way.

"Ah, Moore," Kreizler said, taking a chained watch from his vest with his left hand and extending his right with a smile. "Splendid."

"Laszlo," I answered, shaking his hand. "Cyrus," I added, with a nod that was barely returned.

Kreizler indicated his newspaper as he checked the time. "I'm somewhat irritated with your employers. Yesterday evening I saw a brilliant *Pagliacci* at the Metropolitan, with Melba and Ancona—and all the *Times* can talk about is Alvary's Tristan." He paused to study my face. "You look tired, John."

"I can't imagine why. Tearing around in an uncovered carriage in the middle of the night is usually so restful. Would you mind telling me what I'm doing here?"

"A moment." Kreizler turned to an attendant in a dark blue uniform and box cap who lounged in a straight-backed wooden chair nearby. "Fuller? We're ready."

"Yes sir, Doctor," the man answered, taking an enormous ring of large keys from his belt and starting for the doorway to the central corridor. Kreizler and I fell in to follow, Cyrus remaining behind like a waxwork.

"You *did* read the article, didn't you, Moore?" Kreizler asked, as the attendant unlocked and opened the doorway to the first ward. With the opening the howls and shouts from the cells became almost deafening and quite unnerving. There was little light in the windowless corridor, only that which a few overworked electric bulbs

could offer. Some of the small observation windows in the imposing iron doors of the cells were open.

"Yes," I answered at length, very uneasily. "I read it. And I understand the possible connection—but why do you need *me*?"

Before Kreizler could answer, a woman's face suddenly appeared in the first door to our right. Her hair, though pinned up, was unkempt, and the expression on her worn, broad features was one of violent outrage. That expression changed in an instant, however, when she saw who the visitor was. "Dr. Kreizler!" she said in a hoarse but passionate gasp.

At that the train of reaction was propelled into high speed: Kreizler's name spread down the corridor from cell to cell, inmate to inmate, through the walls and iron doors of the women's ward and on into the men's. I'd seen this happen several times before, in different institutions, but it was no less remarkable on each occasion: the words were like the flow of water over coals, taking away crackling heat and leaving only a steaming whisper, a perhaps momentary but nonetheless effective remission from deep-burning fire.

The cause of this singular phenomenon was simple. Kreizler was known throughout the patient, as well as the criminal, medical, and legal, communities in New York to be the man whose testimony in court or at a sanity hearing could determine, more than that of any other alienist of the day, whether a given person was sent to prison, to the somewhat less horrifying confines of a mental institution, or back out onto the streets. The moment he was spotted in a place such as the Pavilion, therefore, the usual sounds of madness gave way to an eerie attempt at coherent communication on the part of most of the inmates. Only the uninitiated or the hopelessly distressed would continue their ravings; and yet the effect of this sudden reduction in noise was not at all reassuring. Indeed, it was in some ways worse on the nerves, for one knew that the attempt at order was a strained one, and that the sounds of anguish would soon return—again, like burning coals roasting away the transitory suppression of a splash of water.

Kreizler's reaction to the inmates' behavior was no less disconcerting, for one was left only to imagine what experiences in his life and career could have implanted in him the ability to walk through such a place and witness such desperate performances (all peppered by measured yet passionate pleas of "Dr. Kreizler, I must talk with you!" "Dr. Kreizler, please, I am not like these others!") without submitting to fear, revulsion, or despair. As he moved in

measured strides down the long corridor, his brows drew together over his gleaming eyes, which shot quickly from side to side, cell to cell, with a look of sympathetic admonishment: as if these people were errant children. At no point did he allow himself to address any of the inmates, but this refusal was not cruel; quite the contrary, for to speak to any one would only have raised that unfortunate person's hopes, perhaps unrealistically, while dashing those of the other supplicants. Any patients present who had been in madhouses or prisons before, or who had been under observation for an extended period at Bellevue, knew that this was Kreizler's practice; and they made their most emphatic pleas with their eyes, aware that it was only with the organ of sight that Kreizler would acknowledge them.

We passed through the sliding iron doors and into the men's ward, and followed the attendant Fuller to the last cell on the left. He stood to the side and opened the small observation window in the heavily banded door. "Wolff!" he called. "Visitors for you. Official business, so behave."

Kreizler stood before the window looking inward, and I watched over his shoulder. Inside the small, bare-walled cell a man sat on a rough cot, under which lay a dented steel chamber pot. Heavy bars covered the one small window, and ivy obscured the little external light that tried to enter. A metal pitcher of water and a tray bearing a bit of bread and an oatmeal-encrusted bowl lay on the floor near the man, whose head was in his hands. He wore only an undershirt and woolen pants without a belt or suspenders (suicide being the worry). Heavy shackles were clamped around his wrists and ankles. When he lifted his face, a few seconds after Fuller's call, he revealed a pair of red eyes that reminded me of some of my worst mornings; and his deeply lined, whiskered face bore an expression of detached resignation.

"Mr. Wolff," Kreizler said, watching the man carefully. "Are you sober?"

"Who wouldn't be?" the man answered slowly, his words indistinct, "after a night in this place?"

Kreizler closed the small iron gate that covered the window and turned to Fuller. "Has he been drugged?"

Fuller shrugged uncomfortably. "He was raving when they brought him in, Dr. Kreizler. Seemed more than just drunk, the superintendent said, so they jabbed him full of chloral."

Kreizler sighed in deep irritation. Chloral hydrate was one of the banes of his existence, a bitter-tasting, neutrally colored, somewhat caustic compound that slowed the rate of the heart and thus made the subject singularly calm—or, if used as it was in many saloons, almost comatose and an easy target for robbery or kidnapping. The body of the medical community, however, insisted that chloral did not cause addiction (Kreizler violently disagreed); and at twenty-five cents a dose, it was a cheap and convenient alternative to wrestling a patient into chains or a leather harness. It was therefore used with abandon, especially on mentally disturbed or simply violent subjects; but in the twenty-five years since its introduction, its use had spread to the general public, who were free, in those days, to buy not only chloral, but morphine, opium, cannabis indica, or any other such substance at any drugstore. Many thousands of people had destroyed their lives by freely surrendering to chloral's power to "release one from worry and care, and bring on healthful sleep" (as one manufacturer put it). Death by overdose had become common; more and more suicides were connected to chloral use; and yet the doctors of the day continued blithely to insist on its safety and utility.

"How many grains?" Kreizler asked, exchanging weariness for annoyance—he was aware that administration of the drug was neither Fuller's job nor his fault.

"They began with twenty," the attendant answered sheepishly. "I told them, sir, I told them you were scheduled for the evaluation and that you'd be angry, but—well, you know, sir."

"Yes," Kreizler answered quietly, "I know." Which made three of us —and what we knew was that on hearing of Kreizler's slated appearance and probable objections, the Pavilion's superintendent had almost certainly doubled the dose of chloral and significantly decreased Wolff's ability to participate in the kind of assessment Kreizler liked to make, which involved many probing questions and was ideally conducted on a subject free of the effects of drugs or alcohol. Such was the general feeling among his colleagues, particularly those of the older generation, toward Kreizler.

"Well," Laszlo announced, after pondering the question for a few moments. "There's nothing to do—we are here, Moore, and time presses." I thought immediately about the strange reference to "a timetable" in Kreizler's note to Roosevelt the night before; but I said nothing as he unbolted the door and pulled at its considerable weight. "Mr. Wolff," Kreizler announced, "we must talk."

For the next hour I sat through Kreizler's examination of this vague, disoriented man, who held as firmly as the chloral hydrate would allow to the notion that if he had truly erased most of young Louisa Rudesheimer's head with his pistol—and we assured him that he had—then he must be insane, and should of course be sent to an asylum (or at most to the facility for insane convicts at Mattewan) rather than to prison or the gallows. Kreizler took careful note of this attitude but for the moment did not discuss the case itself. Instead he ran through a long list of seemingly unconnected questions about Wolff's past, his family, friends, and childhood. The questions were deeply personal and in any normal setting would have seemed presumptuous and even offensive; and the fact that Wolff's reactions to Kreizler's inquiries were less violent than most men's was almost certainly due to his being drugged. But the absence of anger also indicated a lack of precision and forthrightness in the responses, and the interview seemed destined for a premature end.

But not even Wolff's chemically induced calm could be maintained when Kreizler finally began to ask him about Louisa Rudesheimer. Had Wolff harbored any sexual feelings toward the girl? Laszlo inquired, with a bluntness not often heard in discussions of such subjects. Were there other children in his building or in his neighborhood toward whom he did harbor such feelings? Did he have a lady friend? Did he visit disorderly houses? Did he find himself sexually drawn to young boys? Why had he shot the girl and not stabbed her? Wolff was at first bewildered by all this, and appealed to the attendant, Fuller, asking whether or not he must answer. Fuller, with somewhat lascivious glee, made it plain that he must, and Wolff complied, for a time. But after half an hour of it he staggered to his feet, rattled his manacles, and swore that no man could force him to participate in such an obscene inquisition. He declared defiantly that he would rather face the hangman; at which point Kreizler stood and stared straight into Wolff's eyes.

"I fear that in New York State, the electrical chair is increasingly usurping the gallows, Mr. Wolff," he said evenly. "Although I suspect that, based on your answers to my questions, you will find that out for yourself. God have mercy on you, sir."

As Kreizler strode toward the door, Fuller quickly pulled it open. I took a last look at Wolff before following Laszlo out: the man's aspect had suddenly shifted from indignant to deeply fearful, but he was too weak now to do more than mumble pathetic protests as to what he was certain was his insanity and then fall back onto his cot.

Kreizler and I walked back down the Pavilion's main corridor as Fuller rebolted the door to Wolff's cell. The quiet pleas of the other patients began again, but we were soon through them. Once we were out and in the vestibule, the shouts and howls behind us gained in volume once more.

"I believe we can dismiss him, Moore," Kreizler said, quietly and wearily, as he pulled on a pair of gloves that Cyrus handed him. "Drugged though he may be, Wolff has revealed himself—violent, certainly, and resentful of children. A drunkard, as well. But he is not mad, nor do I think he is connected to our current business."

"Ah," I said, seizing the opportunity, "now, about that—"

"They'll *want* him to be mad, of course," Laszlo mused, not hearing me. "The doctors here, the newspapers, the judges, they'd like to think that only a madman would shoot a five-year-old girl in the head. It creates certain…*difficulties,* if we are forced to accept that our society can produce sane men who commit such acts." He sighed once and took an umbrella from Cyrus. "Yes, that will be a long day or two in court, I should think…"

We exited the Pavilion, myself seeking refuge with Kreizler under his umbrella, and then climbed into the now-covered calash. I knew what was coming: a monologue that was a kind of catharsis for Kreizler, a restatement of some of his most basic professional principles, designed to relieve the enormous responsibility of helping send a man to his death. Kreizler was a confirmed opponent of the practice of executing criminals, even vicious murderers such as Wolff; but he did not allow this opposition to affect his judgment or his definition of true insanity, which was, by comparison with that of many of his colleagues, relatively narrow. As Cyrus jumped into the driver's seat of the calash and the carriage pulled away from Bellevue, Kreizler's diatribe began to cover subjects I'd heard him discuss many times before: how a broad definition of insanity might make society as a whole feel better but did nothing for mental science, and only lessened the chance that the truly mentally diseased would receive proper care and treatment. It was an insistent sort of speech—Kreizler seemed to be trying to push the image of Wolff in the electrical chair further and further away—and as it wound on, I realized that there was no hope of my gaining any hard information concerning just what in hell was going on and why I'd been called into whatever it was.

Glancing about at the passing buildings in some frustration, I let my eyes come to rest on Cyrus, momentarily thinking that, since he had to

listen to this sort of thing more than anyone, I might get some sympathy out of the man. I should have known better. Like Stevie Taggert, Cyrus had had a hard life before coming to work for Laszlo and was now quite devoted to my friend. As a boy in New York Cyrus had seen his parents literally torn to pieces during the draft riots of 1863, when angry hordes of white men and women, many of them recently arrived immigrants, expressed their unwillingness to fight for the causes of the Union and slave emancipation by laying hold of any blacks they could find—including young children—and dismembering them, burning them alive, tarring them, whatever medieval tortures their Old World minds could conceive. A talented musician with a splendid bass-baritone voice, Cyrus had been taken in by a pandering uncle after his parents' death, and trained to be a "professor," a piano player in a brothel that proferred young black women to white men of means. But his youthful nightmare had left him rather reluctant to tolerate bigoted abuse from the house's customers. One night in 1887 he had come upon a drunken policeman taking his graft in trade, which the cop apparently thought included brutal blows from the back of his hand and taunts of "nigger bitch." Cyrus had calmly gone to the kitchen, fetched a large butcher knife, and dispatched the cop to that special Valhalla reserved for fallen members of the New York City Police Department.

Enter Kreizler once again. Expounding a theory he called "explosive association," he had revealed the genesis of Cyrus's actions to the judge in the case: during the few minutes involved in the killing, Laszlo said, Cyrus had returned in his mind to the night of his parents' death, and the well of anger that had been left untapped since that incident came gushing forth and engulfed the offending policeman. Cyrus was not insane, Kreizler announced; he had responded to the situation in the only way possible for a man with his background. The judge had been impressed by Kreizler's arguments, but given the public mood he could hardly release Cyrus. Internment in the New York City Lunatic Asylum on Blackwells Island was suggested; but Kreizler stated that employment at his Institute would be far more likely to effect rehabilitation. The judge, anxious to be rid of the case, agreed. The affair didn't do anything to mitigate Kreizler's public and professional reputation as a maverick, and it certainly didn't make the average visitor to Laszlo's home anxious to be alone in the kitchen with Cyrus. But it did ensure the man's loyalty.

There was no break in the pelting rain as we moved at a trot down the Bowery, the only major street in New York that, to my knowledge, has never known the presence of a church. Saloons, concert halls, and flophouses flashed by, and when we passed Cooper Square I spotted

the large electric sign and shaded windows of Biff Ellison's Paresis Hall, where Giorgio Santorelli had centered his pathetic operations. On we drove, through more tenement wastelands whose sidewalk mayhem was only slightly moderated by the rain. It was not until we had turned onto Bleecker Street and were nearing Police Headquarters that Kreizler said flatly:

"You saw the body."

"Saw it?" I said in some annoyance, though I was relieved to finally discuss the subject. "I still see it if I close my eyes for more than a minute. What the hell was the idea of getting my whole house up and forcing me to go down there, anyway? It's not as though I can report that kind of thing, you know that—all it did was agitate my grandmother, and that's not much of an achievement."

"I'm sorry, John. But you needed to see just what it is we'll be dealing with."

"*I* am not dealing with anything!" I protested again. "I'm only a reporter, remember, a reporter with a gruesome story that I can't tell."

"You do yourself no justice, Moore," Kreizler said. "You are a veritable cyclopedia of privileged information—though you may not realize it."

My voice rose: "Laszlo, what in *hell*—"

But once again, I could get no further. As we turned onto Mulberry Street I heard calling voices, and looked up to see Link Steffens and Jake Riis running toward the carriage.

CHAPTER 5

The closer the church, the nearer to God," was how one gangland wit had put his decision to base his criminal operations within a few blocks of Police Headquarters. The statement could have been made by any one of dozens of like characters, for the northern terminus of Mulberry Street at Bleecker (headquarters was located at Number 300) marked the heart of a jungle of tenements, brothels, concert halls, saloons, and gambling houses. One group of girls who staffed a disorderly house directly across Bleecker Street from 300 Mulberry made great sport, during their few idle hours, of sitting in the house's green-shuttered windows and watching the doings at headquarters through opera glasses, then offering commentary to passing police officials. That was the sort of carnival atmosphere that surrounded the place. Or perhaps one should rather say that it was a circus, and a brutal Roman one at that—for several times a day, bleeding victims of crime or wounded perpetrators of it would be dragged into the rather nondescript, hotel-like structure that was the busy brain of New York's law enforcement arm, leaving a sticky, grim reminder of the deadly nature of the building's business on the pavement outside.

Across Mulberry Street, at Number 303, was the unofficial headquarters of the police reporters: a simple stoop where I and my colleagues spent much of our time, waiting for word of a story. It was therefore not surprising that Riis and Steffens should have been awaiting my arrival. Riis's anxious manner and the gleeful grin that dominated Steffens's gaunt, handsome features indicated that something particularly tasty was up.

"Well, well!" Steffens said, raising his umbrella as he jumped onto the running board of Kreizler's carriage. "The mystery guests arrive together! Good morning, Dr. Kreizler, a pleasure to see you, sir."

"Steffens," Kreizler answered with a nod that was not entirely congenial.

Riis came huffing up behind Steffens, his hulking Danish frame not so lithe as that of the much younger Steffens. "Doctor," he said, to which Kreizler only nodded. He had a positive dislike for Riis; the Dane's pioneering work in revealing the evils of tenement life—most notably through his collection of essays and pictures called *How the Other Half Lives*—did not change the fact that he was a strident moralist and something of a bigot, so far as Kreizler was concerned. And I have to admit, I often saw Laszlo's point. "Moore," Riis went on, "Roosevelt has just thrown us out of his office, saying he is expecting the both of you for an important consultation—some very strange game is being played here, I think!"

"Don't listen to him," Steffens said with another laugh. "His pride's bruised. It seems that there's been another murder which, because of our friend Riis's personal beliefs, will never make the pages of the *Evening Sun*—we've all been riding him rather shamelessly, I'm afraid!"

"Steffens, by God, if you keep at me—" Riis balled up a healthy Scandinavian hand and waved the fist in Steffens's direction as he kept breathing hard and jogging along, trying to keep up with the still-rolling carriage. As Cyrus reined the gelding to a halt outside headquarters, Steffens jumped down.

"Come now, Jake, no threats!" he said good-naturedly. "This is all in fun!"

"What in hell are you two talking about?" I said, as Kreizler, trying to ignore the scene, stepped from the carriage.

"Now, don't play stupid," Steffens answered. "You've seen the body, and so has Dr. Kreizler—we know that much. But unfortunately, since Jake chooses to deny the reality of both boy-whores and the houses in which they work, he can't report the story!"

Riis huffed again, his big face getting redder. "Steffens, I'll teach you—"

"And since we know *your* editors won't print such seamy stuff, John," Steffens went on, "I'm afraid that leaves the *Post*—how about it, Dr. Kreizler? Care to give the details to the only paper in town that'll print them?"

Kreizler's mouth curled into a slight smile that was neither gentle nor amused, but somehow deprecating. "The only, Steffens? What about the *World,* or the *Journal*?"

"Ah, I should have been more precise—the only *respectable* paper in town that will print them."

Kreizler only ran his eyes up and down Steffens's lanky figure. "Respectable," he echoed with a shake of his head, and then he was going up the stairs.

"Say what you like, Doctor," Steffens called after him, still smiling, "but you'll get a fairer shake from us than from Hearst or Pulitzer!" Kreizler did not acknowledge the comment. "We understand you examined the killer this morning," Steffens pressed. "Would you at least talk about that?"

Pausing at the door, Kreizler turned. "The man I examined was indeed a killer. But he has nothing to do with the Santorelli boy."

"Really? Well, you might want to let Detective Sergeant Connor know that. He's been telling us all morning that Wolff got crazed for blood by shooting the little girl and went out looking for another victim."

"What?" Genuine alarm was in Kreizler's face. "No—no, he mustn't—it is absolutely vital that he not do that!"

Laszlo bolted inside just as Steffens made a final attempt to get him to talk. With his quarry now gone, my colleague from the *Evening Post* put his free hand to his hip, his smile shrinking just a bit. "You know, John—that man's attitude doesn't win him many admirers."

"It's not intended to," I said, starting up the steps. Steffens grabbed my arm.

"Can't you tell us anything, John? It's not like Roosevelt to keep Jake and me out of police business—hell, we're more members of the Board of Commissioners than those fools who sit with him."

That was true: Roosevelt had often consulted both Riis and Steffens on questions of policy. Nonetheless, I could only shrug. "If I knew anything, I'd tell you, Link. They've kept me in the dark, too."

"But the body, Moore," Riis chimed in. "We have heard ungodly rumors—surely they are false!"

Thinking for just a moment of the corpse on the bridge anchor, I sighed. “However ungodly the rumors, boys, they can’t begin to describe it.” With that I turned and strode up the steps.

Before I was inside the door Riis and Steffens were at it again, Steffens pelting his friend with sarcastic barbs and Riis angrily trying to shut him up. But Link was right, even if he expressed himself somewhat meanly: Riis’s stubborn insistence that homosexual prostitution did not exist meant that another of the city’s largest papers would never acknowledge the full details of a brutal murder. And how much more the report would have meant coming from Riis than from Steffens; for while most of Link’s important work as an exponent of the Progressive movement lay in the future, Riis was long since an established voice of authority, the man whose angry declamations had caused the razing of Mulberry Bend (the very heart of New York’s most notorious slum, Five Points) along with the destruction of many other pestilential pockets. Yet Jake could not bring himself to fully acknowledge the Santorelli murder; despite all the horrors he had witnessed, he could not accept the circumstances of such a crime; and as I entered the big green doors of headquarters I wondered, just as I had wondered a thousand times during staff meetings at the *Times,* how long many members of the press—not to mention politicians and the public—would be content to equate deliberate ignorance of evil with its nonexistence.

Inside I found Kreizler standing near the caged elevator, talking heatedly with Connor, the detective who had been at the murder scene the previous night. I was about to join them when my arm was taken and I was guided toward a staircase by one of the more pleasant sights available at headquarters: Sara Howard, an old friend of mine.

“Don’t get involved in that, John,” she said, with a tone of sage wisdom that often marked her statements. “Connor is taking a lashing from your friend, and he deserves the full treatment. Besides, the president wants you upstairs—*sans* Dr. Kreizler.”

“Sara!” I said happily. “I am glad to see you. I’ve spent a night and a morning with maniacs. I need the sound of a sane voice.”

Sara’s taste in dresses ran toward simple designs in shades of green that matched her eyes, and the one she wore that day, with only a minimal bustle and not much petticoat business, showed off her tall, athletic body to advantage. Her face was by no means striking but handsomely plain; it was the play of eyes and mouth, back and forth between mischievous and sad, that made it such a delight to watch

her. Back in the early seventies, when I was in my teens, her family moved into a house near ours on Gramercy Park, and I'd subsequently watched her spend her single-digit years turning that decorous neighborhood into her private rumpus room. Time had not changed her much, except to make her as thoughtful (and occasionally brooding) as she was excitable; and following the demise of my engagement to Julia Pratt I had one night gotten more than a little drunk, decided that all women held by society to be beauties were in fact demons, and asked Sara to marry me. Her answer was to take me in a cab to the Hudson River and throw me in.

"You won't find many sane voices in this building today," Sara said as we climbed the stairs. "Teddy—that is, the president—isn't it strange to call him that, John?" And indeed it was; but when Roosevelt was at headquarters, which was ruled by a board of four commissioners of which he was chief, he was distinguished from the other three by the title "president." Very few of us guessed at the time that he would answer to an identical title in the none-too-distant future. "Well, he's been in one of his whirlwinds over the Santorelli case. Every kind of person has been in and out—"

Just then Theodore's voice came booming down from the second-story hallway: "And don't bother bringing your friends at Tammany into this, Kelly! Tammany is a monstrous Democrat creation, and this is a reform Republican administration—you've earned no favors here with your shoulder-hitting! I advise you to cooperate!" Deep chuckles from a pair of voices inside the staircase were the only reply to this, and the sounds were moving our way. Within seconds Sara and I were face-to-face with the foppishly dressed, cologne-drenched, enormous figure of Biff Ellison, as well as his smaller, more tastefully clad, and less aromatic criminal overseer, Paul Kelly.

The days when Lower Manhattan's underworld affairs were parceled out among dozens of freewheeling street gangs had for the most part come to an end by 1896, and dealings had been taken over and consolidated by larger groups that were just as deadly but far more businesslike in their approach. The Eastmans, named for their colorful chief, Monk Eastman, controlled all territory east of the Bowery between Fourteenth Street and Chatham Square; on the West Side, the Hudson Dusters, darlings of many New York intellectuals and artists (largely because they all shared a seemingly insatiable appetite for cocaine), ran affairs south of Thirteenth Street and west of Broadway; the area above Fourteenth Street on that side of town belonged to Mallet Murphy's Gophers, a group of cellar-dwelling Irish creatures whose evolution even Mr. Darwin would have been hard-pressed to

explain; and between these three virtual armies, at the eye of the criminal hurricane and just blocks from Police Headquarters, were Paul Kelly and his Five Pointers, who ruled supreme between Broadway and the Bowery and from Fourteenth Street to City Hall.

Kelly's gang had been named after the city's toughest neighborhood in an attempt to inspire fear, though in reality they were far less anarchic in their dealings than the classic Five Points bands of an earlier generation (the Whyos, Plug Uglies, Dead Rabbits, and the rest), remnants of which still haunted their old neighborhood like violent, disaffected ghosts. Kelly himself was reflective of this change in style: his sartorial acumen was matched by polished speech and manners. He also possessed a thorough knowledge of art and politics, his taste in the former running toward modern and in the latter toward socialism. But Kelly knew his customers, too; and *tasteful* was not the word to describe the New Brighton Dance Hall, the Five Pointers' headquarters on Great Jones Street. Overseen by a singular giant known as Eat-'Em-Up Jack McManus, the New Brighton was a garish mass of mirrors, crystal chandeliers, brass railings, and scantily clad "dancers," a flash palace unequaled even in the Tenderloin, which, before Kelly's rise, had been the unquestioned center of outlaw opulence.

James T. "Biff" Ellison, on the other hand, represented the more traditional sort of New York thug. He had begun his career as a particularly unsavory saloon bouncer, and had first gained notoriety by beating and stomping a police officer nearly to death. Though he aspired to his boss's polish, on Ellison—ignorant, sexually depraved, and drug-ridden as he was—the attempt became grotesquely ostentatious. Kelly had murderous lieutenants whose doings were infamous and even daring, but none save Ellison would have dared to open Paresis Hall, one of the mere three or four saloons in New York that openly—indeed, exuberantly—catered to that segment of society which Jake Riis so assiduously refused to believe existed.

"Well, now," Kelly said amiably, the stud in his cravat gleaming as he approached, "it's Mr. Moore of the *Times*—along with one of the lovely new ladies of the Police Department." Taking Sara's hand, Kelly lowered his chiseled, Black Irish features and kissed it. "It certainly is more enjoyable getting summoned to headquarters these days." His smile as he stared at Sara was well practiced and confident; none of which changed the fact that the air in the staircase had suddenly become charged with oppressive threat.

"Mr. Kelly," Sara answered with a brave nod, though I could see

that she was quite nervous. “A pity your charm isn’t matched by the company you choose to keep.”

Kelly laughed, but Ellison, who already towered over Sara and me, rose up even higher, his fleshy face and ferret’s eyes darkening. “It’d be best to watch your mouth, missy—it’s a long walk from headquarters to Gramercy Park. A lot of unpleasant things could happen to a girl all alone.”

“You’re a real rabbit, aren’t you, Ellison?” I said, although the man could have broken me in half without much thought. “What’s the matter—run out of little boys to push around, you need to start on women?”

Ellison’s face went positively red. “Why, you miserable piece of scribbling shit—sure, Gloria was trouble, a whole bundle of trouble, but I wouldn’t a cooked her for it, and I’ll kill any man says I—”

“Now, now, Biff.” Kelly’s tone was pleasant, but his meaning was unmistakable: Knock it off. “There’s no cause for any of that.” And then to me: “Biff had nothing to do with the boy’s murder, Moore. And I don’t want to see my name connected with it, either.”

“Hell of a time to think of that, Kelly,” I answered. “I saw his body—it was worthy of Biff, all right.” In fact, not even Ellison had ever done anything so horrendous, but there was no reason to acknowledge that to them. “He was just a boy.”

Kelly chuckled as he took a few steps farther down the stairs. “Yes, and a boy playing a dangerous game. Come on, Moore, boys like that die every day in this town—why the interest? Did he have a secret relative somewhere? A bastard kid of Morgan’s or Frick’s?”

“Do you think that’s the only reason the case would be investigated?” Sara asked, somewhat offended—she hadn’t been working at headquarters very long.

“My dear girl,” Kelly answered, “both Mr. Moore and I *know* that’s the only reason. But have it your way—Roosevelt is championing the benighted!” Kelly continued down the stairs, and Ellison pushed by me to follow. They paused a little farther down and then Kelly turned, his voice for the first time hinting at his occupation. “But I warn you, Moore—I do *not* want to see my name connected with this.”

“Don’t worry, Kelly. My editors would never run the story.”

He smiled again. “Very sensible of them, too. There are momentous things going on in the world, Moore—why waste energy on a trifle?”

With that they were gone, and Sara and I collected ourselves. Kelly may have been a new breed of gangster, but he was a gangster all the same, and our encounter had been genuinely unsettling.

“Do you know,” Sara said thoughtfully as we started upstairs again, “that my friend Emily Cort went slumming one night specifically to meet Paul Kelly—and that she found him the most entertaining man? But then, Emily always was an empty-headed little fool.” She took hold of my arm. “By the way, John, why in the world did you call Mr. Ellison a rabbit? He’s more like an ape.”

“In the language he speaks, a rabbit is a tough customer.”

“Oh. I must remember to write that down. I want my knowledge of the criminal class to be as thorough as possible.”

I could only laugh. “Sara—with all the professions open to women these days, why do you insist on this one? Smart as you are, you could be a scientist, a doctor, even—”

“So could you, John,” she answered sharply. “Except that you don’t happen to want to. And, by way of coincidence, neither do I. Honestly, sometimes you are the most idiotic man. You know perfectly well what I want.” And so did every other friend of Sara’s: to be the city’s first female police officer.

“But, Sara, are you any closer to your goal? You’re only a secretary, after all.”

She smiled wisely, with a hint of that same tense sharpness behind the smile. “Yes, John—but I’m in the building, aren’t I? Ten years ago *that* would have been impossible.”

I nodded with a shrug, aware that it was useless to argue with her, and then looked around the second-floor hallway in an attempt to find a familiar face. But the detectives and officers that came from and went to the various rooms were all new to me. “Hell’s bells,” I said quietly, “I don’t recognize *anyone* up here today.”

“Yes, it’s gotten worse. We lost a dozen more last month. They’d all rather resign or retire than face investigation.”

“But Theodore can’t staff the whole force with googoos.” Such being

the colloquial term for new officers.

"So everyone says. But if the choice is between corruption and inexperience, you know which way he'll go." Sara gave me a firm push in the back. "Oh, do stop dawdling, John, he wanted you right away." We wove through uniformed leatherheads and "fly cops" (officers dressed in civilian clothing) until we were at the end of the hall. "And later," Sara added, "you must explain to me exactly why it is that cases like this one are not usually investigated." Then, in a flurry, she rapped on the door of Theodore's office, opened it, and kept on shoving me till I was through. "Mr. Moore, Commissioner," she announced, closing the door and leaving me inside.

Voluminous reader and writer that he was, Theodore had a penchant for massive desks, and his office at headquarters was dominated by one. A few armchairs were crowded around it uncomfortably. A tall clock sat atop the white mantel of the fireplace, and there was a shiny brass telephone on a small side table; otherwise the only items in the room were stacks of books and papers, some resting on the floor and going halfway up to the ceiling. The shades on the windows, which faced out onto Mulberry Street, were drawn halfway down and Theodore stood before one of them, wearing a very conservative gray suit for the business day.

"Ah, John, excellent," he said, hustling around the desk and then mangling my hand. "Kreizler's downstairs?"

"Yes. You wanted to see me alone?"

Theodore paced about in a mix of serious yet merry anticipation. "What's his mood? How will he respond, do you think? He's such a tempestuous fellow—I want to make sure I take the right tack with him."

I shrugged. "He's all right, I suppose. We were up at Bellevue seeing this Wolff character, the one who shot the little girl, and he was in a hell of a mood after that. But he worked it out during the ride down—on my ears. However, Roosevelt, since I have no idea what it is you want him for—"

Just then there was another quick, light knock on the door, and then Sara reappeared. She was followed by Kreizler: they had evidently been chatting, and as their conversation faded away inside the office I noticed that Laszlo was studying her intently. At the time this didn't seem particularly remarkable; it was how most people

reacted to finding a woman employed at headquarters.

Theodore got between them in a flash. “Kreizler!” he clicked loudly. “Delighted, Doctor, delighted to see you!”

“Roosevelt,” Kreizler answered with a genuinely pleased smile. “It’s been a long while.”

“Too long, too long! Shall we sit and talk, or shall I have the office cleared so that we can enjoy a rematch?”

It was a reference to their first encounter at Harvard, which had involved a boxing match; and as we laughed and sat, the ice very nicely broken, my thoughts drifted back to those days.

Though I’d known Theodore for many years before his arrival at Harvard as a freshman in 1876, I’d never been very close to him. In addition to being sickly, he’d been a studious and generally well-behaved boy, whereas both I and my younger brother had spent our youths ensuring that anarchy reigned as much as possible on the streets of our Gramercy Park neighborhood. “Ringleaders” was a label my brother and I were usually given by our parents’ friends, and there was much talk about the remarkable misfortune of one family being afflicted with two black sheep. In reality there was nothing very evil or malicious in what we did; it was more that we chose to do it in the company of a small band of boys whose homes were the back alleys and doorways of the Gas House district to the east of us. Such were not considered acceptable playmates in our staid little corner of Knickerbocker society, where class counted for much and no adult was prepared to tolerate children with minds of their own. A few years away at preparatory school did nothing to discourage my tendencies; indeed, so great had the general alarm over my behavior grown by my seventeenth birthday that my application for admission to Harvard was almost rejected, a fate I would gladly have accepted. But my father’s deep pockets swung the balance back in my supposed favor and off I went to the stultifying little village of Cambridge, where a year or two of college life did absolutely nothing to make me more inclined to accept a young scholar like Theodore when he arrived.

But in the fall of 1877, during my senior and Theodore’s sophomore year, all this began to change. Laboring under the twin burdens of a difficult romance and a gravely ill father, Theodore began to develop from a rather narrow youth into a much more broad-minded and accessible young man. He never became anything like a man of the world, of course; but we nonetheless managed to discover

philosophical dimensions in each other that allowed us to pass a good many evenings drinking and talking together. Soon we were conducting expeditions into Boston society, both high and low; and on that foundation a solid friendship began to grow.

Meanwhile, another childhood friend of mine, Laszlo Kreizler, having earlier completed an unprecedentedly quick course of study at the Columbia Medical College, had been drawn away from a job as a junior assistant at the Lunatic Asylum on Blackwells Island by a new graduate course in psychology offered at Harvard by Dr. William James. That gregarious, terrier-like professor, who would go on to fame as a philosopher, had recently established America's first psychological laboratory in a few small rooms in Lawrence Hall. He also taught comparative anatomy to undergraduates; and in the fall 1877 term, having heard that James was an amusing professor who was sympathetic when it came to grades, I signed up for his course. On the first day I found myself sitting next to Theodore, who was pursuing the interest in all things wild that had consumed him since early youth. Although Roosevelt often got into spirited discussions over some minor point of animal behavior with James, he, like all of us, quickly became charmed by the still-young professor, who had a habit of reclining on the floor when his students' participation was flagging and declaring that teaching was "a mutual process."

Kreizler's relationship with James was far more complex. Though he greatly respected James's work and grew to have enormous affection for the man himself (it really was impossible not to), Laszlo was nonetheless unable to accept James's famous theories on free will, which were the cornerstone of our teacher's philosophy. James had been a maudlin, unhealthy boy, and as a young man had more than once contemplated suicide; but he overcame this tendency as a result of reading the works of the French philosopher Renouvier, who taught that a man could, by force of will, overcome all psychic (and many physical) ailments. "My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will!" had been James's early battle cry, an attitude that continued to dominate his thinking in 1877. Such a philosophy was bound to collide with Kreizler's developing belief in what he called "context": the theory that every man's actions are to a very decisive extent influenced by his early experiences, and that no man's behavior can be analyzed or affected without knowledge of those experiences. In the laboratory rooms at Lawrence Hall, which were filled with devices for testing and dissecting animal nervous systems and human reactions, James and Kreizler battled over how the patterns of people's lives are formed and whether or not any of us is free to determine what kind of lives we will lead as adults. These encounters became steadily more

heated—not to mention a subject of campus gossip—until finally, one night early in the second term, they debated in University Hall the question "Is Free Will a Psychological Phenomenon?"

Most of the student body attended; and though Kreizler argued well, the crowd was predisposed to dismiss his statements. In addition, James's sense of humor was far more developed than Kreizler's at that time, and the boys at Harvard enjoyed their professor's many jokes at Kreizler's expense. On the other hand, Laszlo's references to philosophers of gloom, such as the German Schopenhauer, as well as his reliance on the evolutionist theories of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer in explaining that survival was the goal of man's mental as much as his physical development, provoked many and prolonged groans of undergraduate disapproval. I confess that even I was torn, between loyalty to a friend whose beliefs had always made me uneasy and enthusiasm for a man and a philosophy that seemed to offer the promise of limitless possibilities for not only my own but every man's future. Theodore—who did not yet know Kreizler, and who had, like James, survived many and severe childhood illnesses by dint of what he reasoned to be sheer willpower—was not troubled by any such qualms: he spiritedly cheered James's eventual and inevitable victory.

I dined with Kreizler after the debate in a tavern across the Charles that was frequented by Harvardians. In the middle of our meal Theodore entered with some friends and, seeing me with Kreizler, requested an introduction. He made some good-natured but pointed remarks about Laszlo's "mystical mumbo jumbo concerning the human psyche" and how it was all the result of his European background; but he went too far when he spouted a jibe about "gypsy blood," for Laszlo's mother was Hungarian and he took great offense. Kreizler laid down the challenge for an affair of honor, and Theodore delightedly took him up, suggesting a boxing match. I knew Laszlo would have preferred fencing foils—with his bad left arm he stood little chance in a ring—but he agreed, in keeping with the *code duello,* which gave Theodore, as the challenged party, the choice of weapons.

To Roosevelt's credit, when the two men had stripped to their waists in the Hemenway Gymnasium (entered, at that late hour, by way of a set of keys I had won from a custodian in a poker game earlier in the year) and saw Kreizler's arm, he offered to let him choose some weapon other than fists; but Kreizler was stubborn and proud, and though he was, for the second time in the same evening, predestined for defeat, he put up a far better fight than anyone had expected. His gameness impressed all present and, predictably, won him Roosevelt's heartfelt admiration. We all returned to the tavern

and drank until the late hours; and though Theodore and Laszlo never became the most intimate of friends, a very special bond had been formed between them, one that opened Roosevelt's mind—if only a crack—to Kreizler's theories and opinions.

That opening was a good part of the reason we were now collected in Theodore's office; and as we talked of the old days in Cambridge, our immediate business receded for a time. The conversation soon spread to the more recent past, Roosevelt asking some genuinely interested questions about Kreizler's work with both the children at his Institute and the criminally insane, and Laszlo saying that he had followed Theodore's career as an assemblyman in Albany and a civil service commissioner in Washington with great interest. It was pleasant talk among old friends who had a great deal of catching up to do, and for much of the time I was content to sit back and listen, enjoying the change of atmosphere from the previous night and morning.

But inevitably, the conversation turned to the Santorelli murder; and a sense of foreboding and sadness crept relentlessly into the room, dissipating pleasant memories as cruelly as some unknown savage had dispatched the boy on the bridge tower.

CHAPTER 6

I have your report, Kreizler," Roosevelt said, picking up the document from his desk. "Along with the coroner's. It won't surprise you to learn that he gave us no additional insights."

Kreizler nodded in distasteful familiarity. "Any butcher or patent-medicine salesman can be appointed a coroner, Roosevelt. It's almost as easy as becoming an asylum superintendent."

"Indeed. At any rate, your report seems to indicate—"

"It does not indicate *everything* I discovered," Kreizler interrupted carefully. "Indeed, it does not cover some of the most important points."

"Eh?" Theodore looked up in surprise, the pince-nez that he wore in the office falling from his nose. "I beg your pardon?"

"Many eyes see reports at headquarters, Commissioner." Kreizler was doing his best to be diplomatic, which in his case was a genuine effort. "I did not wish to take the chance of certain details becoming… public. Not yet."

Theodore paused, his eyes narrowing pensively. "You write," he eventually said quietly, "of terrible errors."

Kreizler stood and walked to the window, pulling the shade aside just a crack. "First of all, Roosevelt, you must promise me that persons such as"—he said the rank with true disgust—"Detective Sergeant Connor will not be told any of this. The man has spent this morning propagating false information to the press—information that may well end up costing more lives."

Theodore's ordinarily furrowed brow became positively creased. "By thunder! If that's true, Doctor, I'll have the man's—"

Kreizler held up a hand. "Just promise me that, Roosevelt."

"You have my word. But at least tell me what Connor said."

"He has given several reporters the impression," Kreizler answered, beginning to walk the floor of the office, "that this man Wolff was responsible for the Santorelli killing."

"Then you think otherwise?"

"Unquestionably. Wolff's thoughts and actions are entirely too unpremeditated and unsystematic for this. Though he *is* utterly devoid of emotional restraint, and has no aversion to violence."

"Would you consider him a…" For Roosevelt the language was somewhat unfamiliar. "A psychopath?" Kreizler cocked an eyebrow. "I have seen some of your recent writings," Theodore went on, looking a bit self-conscious. "Though I can't say how much I've truly understood."

Kreizler nodded with a small, enigmatic smile. "Is Wolff a psychopath, you ask. There is constitutional psychopathic inferiority, without question. But as to the *implications* of labeling him a psychopath—if you've read even some of the literature, Roosevelt, you know that that depends on whose opinions we accept."

Roosevelt nodded in return and rubbed his chin with one of his tough hands. I did not then know, but would learn in the weeks to come, that one of the greatest single points of contention between Kreizler and many of his colleagues—a battle that had been fought primarily in the pages of the *American Journal of Insanity,* a quarterly published by the national organization of asylum superintendents—was the issue of what constituted a true homicidal lunatic. Men and women whose savagely violent acts betrayed peculiar patterns of moral thought, but whose intellectual capacities were acknowledged to be healthy, had recently been included within the broad classification of "psychopathic personalities" by the German psychologist Emil Kraepelin. The classification had been generally accepted throughout the profession; the contested question was, were such psychopaths genuinely mentally diseased? Most doctors answered in the affirmative, and although they couldn't yet precisely identify the full nature and causes of the disease, they thought such discoveries only a matter of time. Kreizler, on the other hand, believed

that psychopaths were produced by extreme childhood environments and experiences and were unafflicted by any true pathology. Judged in context, the actions of such patients could be understood and even predicted (unlike those of the truly mad). This was clearly the diagnosis he had reached with regard to Henry Wolff.

"Then you'll declare him competent to stand trial?" Roosevelt asked.

"I will." Kreizler's face darkened perceptibly, and he stared at his hands as he folded them together. "And, more importantly, I'll wager that long before that trial begins we will have proof that he is not connected to the Santorelli case. Grim proof."

I was finding it hard to remain silent. "That proof being…?" I asked.

Kreizler's hands fell to his sides as he returned to the window. "More bodies, I fear. Especially if an attempt is made to tie Wolff to Santorelli. Yes." Kreizler's voice became distracted. "He'd be angered by having his thunder stolen that way…"

"*Who* would?"

But Laszlo didn't seem to hear me. "Do either of you remember," he continued, in the same distant tone, "an interesting case of some three years ago, also involving murdered children? Roosevelt, I'm afraid it was at the height of your struggles in Washington, so you may not have heard. And Moore, I believe you were at the time involved in a rather heated battle with *The Washington Post,* which wanted Roosevelt's head on a platter."

"The *Post,*" I sighed in disgust. "The *Post* was in the muck up to its eyes with every illegal government appointee—"

"Yes, yes," Kreizler answered, holding up the weakened left arm to head me off. "There is no question that yours was the honorable position. The loyal one, too, although your editors seemed to be less enthusiastic in their support."

"They came 'round in the end," I said, puffing up the chest a bit. "Not that it saved my job," I added, slacking again.

"Now, now. No self-recrimination, Moore. But as I was saying, three years ago a water tower above a large tenement on Suffolk Street just north of Delancey was struck by lightning. The tower was the highest structure in the neighborhood, and the event was perfectly explicable,

if slightly unusual. When the building's residents and the fire department reached the roof, however, some were inclined to view it as a providential event—for the tower contained the bodies of a pair of children. A brother and sister. Their throats had been cut. It so happened that I knew the family. They were Jews from Austria. The children were quite beautiful—delicate features, enormous brown eyes—and also quite troublesome. An embarrassment to the family. They stole, lied, attacked other children—uncontrollable. In fact, there was very little remorse in the neighborhood over their deaths. The bodies were in an advanced state of decomposition when they were found. The boy's had falled off an interior platform on which they were originally placed, and into the water. It was badly bloated. The girl's was somewhat more intact for having stayed dry, but any clues that might have been gathered from it were destroyed by another incompetent coroner. I never saw anything more than the official reports, but I did note one curious detail from those." He pointed with his left hand to his face. "The eyes were gone."

A quiver went through me as I remembered not only the Santorelli boy but the two other murders that Roosevelt had told me of the night before. Glancing at Roosevelt, I saw that he had made the same connection: while his body was quite still, his eyes were wide with apprehension. But we both tried to battle the feeling off, Roosevelt declaring, "That's not uncommon. Particularly if the bodies were exposed for a long period of time. And if the throats were cut, there would have been plenty of blood to attract scavengers."

"Perhaps," Kreizler said with a judicious nod as he continued pacing. "But the water tower was enclosed, with the exact purpose of keeping scavengers and vermin out."

"I see." Theodore puzzled with it. "Were those facts reported?"

"They were," Kreizler answered. "In the *World,* I believe."

"But," I protested, "the water tower or building doesn't exist that can keep certain animals out. Rats, for instance."

"True, John," Kreizler said. "And in the absence of any further details, I was forced to accept that explanation. Why even New York City rats, on discovering a pair of bodies, should so carefully gnaw out only the eyes was a disturbing mystery that I tried to ignore and which remained unaddressed. Until last night." Kreizler took to pacing the floor again. "As soon as I saw the condition of the Santorelli boy, I made an examination of the ocular orbits of the skull. Working by

torchlight was hardly ideal, but I found what I was looking for. On the malar bone as well as the supraorbital ridge were a series of narrow grooves, and on the greater wing of the sphenoid—at the base of the cavities—several small indentations. All consistent with the cutting edge and point of a knife, of the type most frequently used by hunters, I'd say. My guess would be that if we exhumed the bodies of the two 1893 victims—and I intend to request such action—we would find the same thing. In other words, gentlemen, the eyes were removed by the hand of man."

My dread was increasing, and I fumbled for an argument: "But what about what Sergeant Connor said—"

"Moore." Kreizler's voice was definitive. "If we are to continue this discussion we really must dispense with the opinions of men such as Sergeant Connor."

Roosevelt shifted in his chair apprehensively; I could see in his face that he had run out of ways to avoid bringing Kreizler fully up to date. "I feel I must tell you, Doctor," he announced, gripping the arms of his chair, "that we have had two more murders in the last three months that might also fit the…*pattern* you're describing."

The statement stopped Laszlo dead in his tracks. "What?" he said, urgently but quietly. "Where—where were the bodies found?"

"I'm not precisely sure," Theodore answered.

"And were they prostitutes?"

"I believe so, yes."

"You *believe* so? Records, Roosevelt, I must have the records! Didn't anyone in this department ever think to make a connection? Didn't *you*?"

The records were sent for. From them we discovered that the bodies of the other two boys, both of whom had indeed been prostitutes, had also been found within what the coroners guessed were hours of their deaths. As Roosevelt had told me the night before, there was somewhat less mutilation involved than in the Santorelli murder; that seemed, however, a difference of quantity rather than quality, for the similarities among the cases far outweighed any slight differences. The first boy, a twelve-year-old African immigrant with no known name other than "Millie," had been chained to the stern of an Ellis Island ferry; and the second, a ten-year-old named Aaron Morton, had been

found suspended by his feet from the Brooklyn Bridge. Both were nearly naked, according to the reports; both had their throats cut, along with various other bodily lacerations; and, again, both were missing their eyes. As Laszlo finished reading the accounts, he mumbled that last fact to himself several times, lost in cogitation.

"I believe I understand what you're suggesting, Kreizler," Theodore figured aloud; he never liked to be left behind in any intellectual discussion, even one that took place on what was, for him, very alien territory. "A murderer committed just this kind of an outrage three years ago. It was reported. And now another such man, who at some point read the story, has been inspired to imitation." He was satisfied with his own extrapolation. "Is that correct, Doctor? It wouldn't be the first time stories in certain of our newspapers have had that effect."

Kreizler, however, just sat tapping a forefinger against his pursed lips, with a look that clearly stated that the whole affair was far more complicated than even he had guessed.

I searched for some way to reach a different conclusion. "What about the rest of it?" I asked. "The…the missing organs, and the cut-away flesh of the…well, the rest of it. There was none of that in the earlier cases."

"No," Kreizler answered slowly. "But I believe there is an explanation for that difference, not that it need concern us now. The eyes are the link, the key, the way in—I would stake everything on that…" His voice faded again.

"All right," I said, throwing up my hands. "So someone murdered those two children three years ago, and now we've got a mimicking lunatic who also likes to mutilate dead bodies on our hands. What are we supposed to do about it?"

"Almost nothing in what you have just said, John," Kreizler replied evenly, "is accurate. I am not at all certain he is a lunatic. Nor am I inclined to believe that he likes what he does, in the sense that you understand or intend that statement. But most importantly—and I'm afraid that here I must disappoint you, too, Roosevelt—I am as sure as I can be that this is not an imitator but the *same man.*"

And there it was—the statement that both Roosevelt and I had been dreading. I'd been a police reporter for quite a while, ever since my unceremonious removal from the Washington beat as a result of my previously mentioned defense of Roosevelt during his battle with the

patronage system in the Civil Service. I'd even covered some celebrated murder cases abroad. I therefore knew that murderers like the one Kreizler was describing did exist; but that never made it any easier to hear that one was on the loose. And for Roosevelt—who, though a born fighter, understood few of the intimate details of criminal behavior—it was an even harder notion to swallow.

"But…three years!" Theodore said, aghast. "Surely, Kreizler, if such a man did exist he could not have eluded the law for so long!"

"It's no great job to elude that which is not pursuing," Kreizler answered. "And even if the police had taken an interest, they would have been helpless. Because they could not have begun to understand what motivates the murderer."

"Do you?" Roosevelt's words were almost hopeful.

"Not completely. I have the first few pieces—and we must find the rest. For it is only when we truly understand what drives him that we will have even a prayer of solving this case."

"But what *could* drive a man to such things?" Roosevelt said in uncomfortable confusion. "After all, the Santorelli boy had no money. We're investigating the family, but they all appear to have been in their home throughout the night. Unless it was a personal quarrel with someone else, then…"

"I doubt there was any quarrel involved," Laszlo replied. "In fact, the boy may never have seen his murderer before last night."

"You're suggesting that whoever it is kills children he doesn't even *know*?"

"Possibly. It is not *knowing* them that is important to him—it is what they *represent.*"

"And that is?" I asked.

"*That*—is what we must determine."

Roosevelt continued to test carefully: "Do you have any evidence to support such a theory?"

"None, of the kind that you mean. I have only a lifetime of studying similar characters. And the intuition it has given me."

"But…" As Roosevelt stood to take his turn pacing the floor, Kreizler grew more relaxed, the hard part of his work done. Theodore pounded one fist into an open hand insistently. "Listen, Kreizler, it's true that I grew up, as we all did, in a privileged household. But I have made it my business since taking this job to acquaint myself with the underworld of this city, and I have seen many things. No one needs to tell me that depravity and inhumanity have taken on dimensions in New York unheard of anywhere in the world. But what unnameable nightmare, even *here,* could drive a man to this?"

"Do not," Kreizler answered slowly, trying very hard to be clear, "look for causes in this city. Nor in recent circumstances, nor in recent events. The creature you seek was created long ago. Perhaps in his infancy—certainly in childhood. And not necessarily here."

Theodore was momentarily unable to answer, his face an open display of conflicting feelings. The conversation disturbed him deeply, in the same way that similar discussions had disturbed him ever since the first time he met Kreizler. Yet he had known the talk would come to this; known it, even counted on it, I began to see, since the moment he asked me to bring Laszlo to his office. For there was satisfaction in his aspect, too, the realization that what seemed a forbidding, unchartable ocean to every detective in his department was, to the experienced Kreizler, full of currents and courses. Laszlo's theories clearly offered a way of solving what Theodore had been assured was an unsolvable mystery, and thus extending justice to one (or, as it now seemed, more than one) whose death would never have been explored by anyone else in the Police Department. None of which explained why *I* was there.

"John," Theodore said abruptly, without looking at me. "Kelly and Ellison have been here."

"I know. Sara and I ran into them in the staircase."

"What?" Theodore fixed the pince-nez to his nose. "Was there any trouble? Kelly is a devil, particularly when there's a woman about."

"It wasn't what I'd call pleasant," I answered. "But Sara stood her ground like a trooper."

Theodore breathed relief. "Thank God. Though, confidentially, I still sometimes wonder if that was a wise choice." He was referring to his decision to hire Sara, who, along with another departmental secretary, was one of the first two women ever to work for the New York City

police force. Roosevelt had taken a lot of jibes and criticism for those hirings, both in and out of the press; but he had as little patience with the way women were treated in American society as any man I've ever known, and he was determined to give the two a chance.

"Kelly," Theodore went on, "has threatened to create great trouble among the immigrant communities if I try to connect Ellison or him to this case. He says he can whip up all sorts of agitation around the notion that the Police Department allows poor foreign children to be slaughtered with impunity."

Kreizler nodded. "It wouldn't be difficult. Since it's basically true." Roosevelt looked sharply at Kreizler for a moment, but then softened, knowing he was right. "Tell me, Moore," Laszlo asked, "what's your opinion of Ellison? Is there any chance he *is* involved?"

"Biff?" I sat back, stretched my legs out, and weighed it. "He is, without question, one of the worst men in this city. Most of the gangsters who run things now have some kind of human spark in them somewhere, however hidden. Even Monk Eastman has his cats and birds. But Biff—for all I can tell, nothing touches him. Cruelty is really his only sport, the only thing that seems to give him any pleasure. And if I hadn't seen that body, if this were just a hypothetical question about a dead boy who worked out of Paresis Hall, I wouldn't hesitate to say he's a suspect. Motive? He would have had a few, the most likely being to keep the other boys in line, make sure they pay their full cut to him. But there's just one problem with it—style. Biff is a stiletto man, if you know what I mean. He kills quietly, neatly, and a lot of the people he's supposed to have killed have never been found. He's all flash in his clothes, but not in his work. So, much as I'd like to, I can't say as I see him involved in this. It's just not his—style."

I glanced up to find Laszlo giving me a very puzzled look. "John, that is the most intelligent thing I've ever heard you say," he finally announced. "And to think that you wondered why you'd been brought along." He turned to Theodore. "Roosevelt, I shall require Moore as my assistant. His knowledge of this city's criminal activities, and of the locales in which those activities take place, will make him invaluable."

"Assistant?" I echoed. But they were back to ignoring me. Theodore's teeth and narrowing eyes showed that he was quite absorbed in, and pleased with, Kreizler's remark.

"Then you wish to take part in the investigation," he said. "I sensed you would."

"Take part in the *investigation*?" I said, dumbfounded. "Roosevelt, have you lost your Dutch mind? An alienist? A *psychologist*? You've already made an enemy of every senior officer on the force, and half the Board of Commissioners, to boot. They're taking odds in half the gambling hells in town that you'll be fired by Independence Day! If word gets out that you've brought someone like Kreizler in—why, you'd be better off hiring an African witch doctor!"

Laszlo chuckled. "Which is approximately what most of our respectable citizens consider me. Moore's right, Roosevelt. The project would have to be undertaken in absolute secrecy."

Roosevelt nodded. "I'm aware of the realities of the situation, gentlemen, believe me. Secrecy it would be."

"And there is," Kreizler continued, making another careful attempt at diplomacy, "the matter of *terms*…"

"If you mean salary," Roosevelt said, "since you will be acting in an advisory capacity, naturally—"

"I'm afraid that salary is not what I had in mind. Neither is an advisory capacity. Good lord, Roosevelt, the detectives on your force were not even able to divine the clue regarding the removal of the eyes—three murders in three months and the most vital aspect is attributed to rats! Who can say what other blunders they've committed. As for connecting this to the cases of three years ago, assuming such a connection exists, I suspect we'd all die old men in our beds before they'd achieve it, whether they were 'advised' or not. No, it won't do to work with them. What I have in mind is an—*auxiliary* effort."

Roosevelt, ever the pragmatist, was willing to listen. "Go on," he said.

"Give me two or three good young detectives with a sound appreciation of modern methods—men who have no stake in the old order of business in the department, who were never loyal to Byrnes." (Thomas Byrnes was the much-revered creator and former head of the Division of Detectives, a shadowy man who had amassed a large fortune during his tenure—and who had retired, not coincidentally, when Roosevelt was appointed to the board.) "We will set up an office outside of headquarters, though not too far away. Assign someone you

trust as a liaison—again, someone new, someone young. Give us all the intelligence you can without revealing the operation." Laszlo sat back, aware of the thoroughly unprecedented nature of his proposal. "Give us all of this, and I believe we might even have a chance."

Roosevelt braced himself against his desk and rocked quietly on his chair, watching Kreizler. "It would mean my job," he said, without what might have been called appropriate concern, "if it were discovered. I wonder if you truly realize, Doctor, how very much your work frightens and angers the very people who run this city—both its politics and its business. Moore's comment about the African witch doctor is really no joke."

"I assure you, I did not take it as one. But if you are sincere in your wish to stop what is happening"—Kreizler's plea was deeply in earnest—"then you *must* agree."

I was still somewhat amazed by what I was hearing and thought that this would certainly be the moment when Roosevelt would stop flirting with the idea and quash it. Instead he slammed another fist into an open hand. "By thunder, Doctor, I know of a pair of detectives that would suit your purpose down to the ground! But tell me—where would you begin?"

"For the answer to that," Kreizler replied, pointing over to me, "I must thank Moore. It was something he sent me long ago that sparked the idea."

"Something *I* sent you?" For a moment egotism made me put aside my trepidation at this dangerous proposal.

Laszlo approached the window and raised the shade altogether so that he could look outside. "You will remember, John, that some years ago you found yourself in London, during the Ripper killings."

"Certainly I remember," I answered with a grunt. It had not been one of my more successful holidays: three months in London in 1888, when a bloodthirsty ghoul had taken to accosting random prostitutes in the East End and disemboweling them.

"I asked you for information, and for local press reports. You very decently obliged and included in one pouch statements made by the younger Forbes Winslow."

I raked my memory of the time. Forbes Winslow, whose similarly named father had been an eminent British alienist and an early

influence on Kreizler, had set himself up as an asylum superintendent during the 1880s by trading on his father's achievements. The younger Winslow was a conceited fool, for my money, but when the Jack the Ripper killings began he was sufficiently well known to be able to inject himself into the investigation; indeed, he'd claimed that his participation had caused the murders (still unsolved at the time of this writing) to come to an end.

"Don't tell me Winslow's pointed the way for you," I said in astonishment.

"Only inadvertently. In one of his absurd treatises on the Ripper he discussed a particular suspect in the case, saying that if he had created an 'imaginary man'—that was his phrase, 'imaginary man'—to fit the known traits of the murderer, he could not have devised a better one. Well, of course the suspect he favored was proved innocent. But the expression lodged itself in my head." Kreizler turned back to us. "We know nothing of the person we seek, and are unlikely ever to find witnesses who know any more than we do. Circumstantial evidence will be sparse, at best—he has been at work for years, after all, and has had more than enough time to perfect his technique. What we must do—the only thing that *can* be done—is to paint an imaginary picture of the sort of person that *might* commit such acts. If we had such a picture, the significance of what little evidence we collected would be dramatically magnified. We might reduce the haystack in which our needle hides to something more like a—a pile of straw, if you will."

"I will *not,* thank you," I said. My nervousness was only growing. This was precisely the kind of conversation that would fire Roosevelt's mind, and Kreizler knew it. Action, plans, a campaign—it almost wasn't fair to ask Theodore to make a sensible decision when faced with that kind of emotional enticement. I stood up and stretched my arms into what I hoped was a preemptive stance. "Listen, you two," I began, but Laszlo simply touched my arm, gave me one of those looks of his—so authoritative it was downright vexing—and said:

"Do sit down for a moment, Moore." I could do nothing but follow the instruction, in spite of my discomfort. "There is one more thing you both should know. I have said that under the terms I am outlining we might have a chance of success—we would certainly have nothing more. Our quarry's years of practice have not been in vain. The bodies of the two children in the water tower were discovered, remember, only by the most fortunate of accidents. We know nothing about him —we do not even know that it *is* a 'him.' Cases of women murdering

their own and other children—drastically extreme variants of puerperal mania, or what is now called postpartum psychosis—are not uncommon. We have one central cause for optimism."

Theodore looked up brightly. "The Santorelli boy?" He was learning fast.

Kreizler nodded. "More precisely, the Santorelli boy's body. Its location, and those of these other two. The killer could have gone on hiding his victims forever—God only knows how many he's killed in the last three years. Yet now he's given us an open statement of his activities—not unlike the letters, Moore, that the Ripper wrote to various London officials during his killings. Some buried, atrophied, but not yet dead part of our murderer is growing weary of the bloodshed. And in these three bodies we may read, as clearly as if it were words, his warped cry that we find him. And find him quickly—for the timetable by which he kills is a strict one, I suspect. That timetable, too, we must learn to decipher."

"Then you believe you *can* do it quickly, Doctor?" Theodore asked. "An investigation like the one you're describing could not be carried on indefinitely, after all. We must have *results*!"

Kreizler shrugged, seemingly unaffected by Roosevelt's urgent tone. "I have given you my honest opinion. We would have a fighting chance, nothing more—or less." Kreizler put a hand on Theodore's desk. "Well, Roosevelt?"

If it seems odd that I offered no further protest, I can only say this: Kreizler's explanation that his present course of action had been inspired by a document I had sent him years ago, coming as it did on the heels of our shared reminiscences about Harvard and Theodore's mounting enthusiasm for this plan, had suddenly made it plain to me that what was happening in that office was only partly a result of Giorgio Santorelli's death. Its full range of causes seemed to stretch much farther back, to our childhoods and subsequent lives, both individual and shared. Rarely have I felt so strongly the truth of Kreizler's belief that the answers one gives to life's crucial questions are never truly spontaneous; they are the embodiment of years of contextual experience, of the building of patterns in each of our lives that eventually grow to dominate our behavior. Was Theodore—whose credo of active response to all challenges had guided him through physical sickness in youth and political and personal trials in adulthood—truly free to refuse Kreizler's offer? And if he accepted it, was I then free to say no to these two friends, with whom I had lived

through many escapades and who were now telling me that my extracurricular activities and knowledge—so often dismissed as useless by almost everyone I knew—would prove vital in catching a brutal killer? Professor James would have said that, yes, any human being is free, at any time, to pursue or decline anything; and perhaps, objectively, that is true. But as Kreizler loved to say (and Professor James ultimately had a hard time refuting), you cannot objectify the subjective, you cannot generalize the specific. What *man,* or *a* man, might have chosen was arguable; Theodore and I were the men who were there.

So—on that dismal March morning Kreizler and I became detectives, as all three of us knew we must. That certainty was based, as I say, on thorough awareness of each other's characters and pasts; yet there was one person in New York at that threshold moment who had correctly guessed at our deliberations and their conclusion without ever having been so much as introduced to us. Only in retrospect can I see that that person had taken a careful interest in our activities that morning; and that he chose the moment of Kreizler's and my departure from Police Headquarters to deliver an ambiguous yet unsettling message.

Hustling through a new onslaught of heavy rain delivered by an increasingly forbidding sky, Laszlo and I got back into his calash, where I became immediately aware of a peculiar stench, one very unlike the usual odors of horse waste and garbage that predominated on the streets of the city.

"Kreizler," I said, wrinkling my nose as he sat beside me, "has someone been—"

I stopped when I turned to see Laszlo's black eyes fixed on a remote corner of the carriage floor. Following his gaze I caught sight of a balled-up, heavily stained white rag, which I poked at with my umbrella.

"Quite a distinct blend of aromas," Kreizler murmured. "Human blood and excrement, unless I'm mistaken."

I groaned and grabbed my nose with my left hand as I realized he was right. "Some local boy's idea of funny," I said, picking up the rag with the point of my umbrella. "Carriages, like top hats, make good targets." As I flung the rag out the window it disgorged a ball of equally stained printed paper that fell to the carriage floor. I moaned again and tried unsuccessfully to spear the document with my

umbrella. As I did the thing began to come unbunched and I was able to make out a bit of the printing on it.

"Well," I grunted, perplexed. "This sounds like something in *your* department, Kreizler. 'The Relationship of Hygiene and Diet to the Formation of Infantile Neural—'"

With shocking abruptness Kreizler grabbed my umbrella from my hand, stabbed its tip through the bit of paper, and then flung both items out the window.

"What in—Kreizler!" I jumped out of the carriage, retrieved the umbrella, separated it from the offensive piece of paper, and then got back into the calash. "That umbrella wasn't cheap, I'll have you know!"

As I glanced at Kreizler I saw a trace of real apprehension in his features; but then he seemed to force the trace away, and when he spoke it was in a determinedly casual tone. "I am sorry, Moore. But I happen to be familiar with that author. As poor a stylist as he is a thinker. And this is no time to be sidetracked—we've much to do." He leaned forward and called out Cyrus's name, at which the big man's head appeared under the canopy of the carriage. "The Institute, and then on to lunch," Laszlo said. "And pick up some speed, if you can, Cyrus—we could use a bit of fresh air in here."

It was obvious, at that point, that the person who had left the befouled rag in the calash was not a child: for, based on the brief passage that I'd been able to read as well as on Kreizler's reaction, the monograph from which the sheet of paper had been torn was almost certainly one of Laszlo's own works. Thinking that one of Kreizler's many critics—either in the Police Department or from the public at large—was responsible for the act, I didn't delve any deeper into it; but in the weeks to come, the full significance of the incident would become harrowingly clear.

CHAPTER 7

We were anxious to begin marshalling our forces for the investigation, and the delays we experienced, though brief, were frustrating. When Theodore got wind of the speculative interest in Kreizler's visit to headquarters displayed by reporters and police officers, he realized that he'd made a mistake by holding the meeting there, and told us he needed a couple of days to get things calmed down. Kreizler and I used the time to make arrangements regarding our "civilian" occupations. I had to convince my editors to grant me a leave of absence, a goal made somewhat easier by a timely telephone call from Roosevelt, who explained that I was wanted on vital police business. Nonetheless, I was only allowed out of the editorial offices of the *Times* at Thirty-second and Broadway when I pledged that if the investigation resulted in a story that was fit to print, I would not take it to another paper or magazine, regardless of how much money I was offered. I assured my sour-faced taskmasters that they wouldn't want the story anyway, and then breezed down Broadway on a typical March morning in New York: twenty-nine degrees at eleven A.M., with winds of fifty miles an hour cutting through the streets. I was scheduled to meet Kreizler at his Institute, and I had thought to walk, so great was my sense of release at not being answerable to my editors for an indefinite period. But real New York cold—the kind that freezes horse urine in little rivulets on the surface of the streets—will conquer the best of spirits eventually. Outside the Fifth Avenue Hotel I decided to get a cab, pausing only to watch Boss Platt emerge from a carriage and vanish inside, his stiff, unnatural movements doing nothing to reassure the onlooker that he was, in fact, alive.

Kreizler's leave of absence, I speculated inside the cab, would not be so simple a matter as mine. The two dozen or so children at his Institute depended on his presence and his counsel, having come to

him from homes (or streets) where they were either habitually ignored, regularly chastised, or actively beaten. Indeed, I had not initially seen how he proposed to take up another vocation, even temporarily, so great was the need for his steadying hand at the Institute; but then he told me that he still planned to spend two mornings and one night per week there, at which times he would leave our investigation in my hands. It was not the kind of responsibility I'd anticipated, and I was surprised when the notion left me feeling eager rather than anxious.

Shortly after my cab passed through Chatham Square and turned onto East Broadway, I disembarked at Numbers 185–187: the Kreizler Institute. Stepping onto the sidewalk, I saw that Laszlo's calash was also at the curb, and I glanced up at the windows of the Institute, half-expecting to see him looking out for me but finding no face.

Kreizler had bought the Institute's two four-story, red-brick and black-trim buildings with his own money in 1885, and then had their interiors remodeled so that they became one unit. The subsequent upkeep of the place was covered by the fee he charged his wealthier clients, as well as by the considerable income he took in from his work as an expert legal witness. The children's rooms were on the top floor of the Institute, and class and recreational halls occupied the third. On the second floor were Kreizler's consulting and examination rooms, as well as his psychological laboratory, where he performed tests on the children's powers of perception, reaction, association, memory, and all the other psychic functions that so fascinated the alienist community. The ground floor was reserved for his rather forbidding operational theater, where he performed the occasional brain dissection and post-mortem. My cab had pulled up near the black iron stairs that led to the main entrance, at Number 185, and Cyrus Montrose was at the top of them, his head housed in a bowler, his huge frame enveloped in an even more sizable greatcoat, and his wide nostrils breathing cool fire.

"Afternoon, Cyrus," I said with a difficult smile as I climbed the stairs, vainly hoping that I didn't sound as uneasy as I always felt when caught in his shark's stare. "Is Dr. Kreizler here?"

"That's his carriage, Mr. Moore," Cyrus answered, in a pleasant enough voice that still managed to make me sound like one of the bigger idiots in the city. But I just grinned resolutely on.

"I expect you've heard that the doctor and I will be working together for a while?"

Cyrus nodded with what, if I hadn't known better, I would have sworn was a wry smile. "I've heard, sir."

"Well!" I brushed my jacket back and slapped at my vest. "I guess I'll go find him. Afternoon, Cyrus!"

I got no answer from the man as I entered, not that I deserved one; there was no reason for both of us to behave like morons.

The Institute's small vestibule and front hall—white with dark wood wainscoting—were full of the usual fathers, mothers, and children, all crowded onto two long, low benches and waiting to see Kreizler. Almost every morning in the late winter and early spring, Laszlo personally conducted interviews to determine who would be admitted to the Institute the following fall. The applicants ranged from the wealthiest northeastern families to the poorest of immigrants and rural laborers, but they all had one thing in common: a troubled or troublesome child whose behavior was in some way extreme and inexplicable. This was all very serious, of course, but that didn't change the fact that the Institute was, on such mornings, a bit of a zoo. As you walked down the hallway you were likely to be tripped, spat at, cursed, and otherwise maltreated, particularly by those children whose only mental deficiency was that they'd been overindulged, and whose parents clearly could and should have saved themselves the trip to Kreizler's office.

As I moved to the door of Kreizler's consulting room, I locked gazes with one such prospective troublemaker, a fat little boy with malevolent eyes. A dark, heavily lined woman of about fifty, wrapped in a shawl and mumbling something that I suspected was Hungarian, was pacing back and forth in front of the consulting room door; I had to dodge both her and the fat boy's kicking legs in order to get close enough to knock. Having done so I heard Kreizler shout "Yes!" and then I entered, the pacing woman watching me with apparent concern.

After the fairly innocuous vestibule, Laszlo's consulting room was the first place that his prospective patients (whom he always referred to as "students," insisting that his staff do the same in order to avoid making the children conscious of their situations and conditions) saw on entering the space and experience that were the Kreizler Institute. He had therefore taken care that its furnishings were not intimidating. There were paintings of animals that, while reflecting Laszlo's good taste, nonetheless amused and reassured the children, as did the presence of toys—ball-and-cup, simple building blocks, dolls, and lead

soldiers—which Laszlo actually used in making preliminary tests of agility, reaction time, and emotional disposition. The presence of medical instruments was minimal, most being kept in the examination room beyond. It was there that Kreizler would perform his first series of physical investigations, should a given case interest him. These tests were designed to determine whether the child's difficulties stemmed from secondary causes (that is, bodily malfunctions that affected mood and behavior) or primary abnormalities, meaning mental or emotional disorders. If a child showed no evidence of secondary distress, and Kreizler thought he could do some good in the case (in other words, if there were no signs of hopeless brain disease or damage), the child would be "enrolled": he or she would live at the Institute nearly full-time, going home only for holidays, and then only if Kreizler thought such contact safe. Laszlo very much agreed with the theories of his friend and colleague Dr. Adolf Meyer, and often quoted one of Meyer's dictums: "The degenerative processes in children have their chief encouragement in the equally defective home surroundings." Allowing troubled children a new environmental context was the most important goal of the Institute; and beyond that, it was the cornerstone of Laszlo's passionate effort to discover whether or not what he called the "original mold" of the human psyche could be recast and the fate to which the accidents of birth consign each of us thereby redetermined.

Kreizler was sitting at his rather ornate secretary, writing by the light of a small Tiffany desk lamp of muted green and gold glass. Waiting for him to look up, I approached a small bookshelf near the secretary and took down one of my favorite volumes: *The Career and Death of the Mad Thief and Murderer, Samuel Green.* The case, dating from 1822, was one that Laszlo often cited to the parents of his "students," for the infamous Green had been, in Kreizler's words, "a product of the whip"—beaten throughout his childhood—and at the time of his capture had openly acknowledged that his crimes against society were a form of revenge. My own attraction to the book was prompted by its frontispiece, which depicted "The Madman Green's End" on a Boston gallows. I had always enjoyed Green's crazed stare in the picture, and was amusedly reacquainting myself with it when Kreizler, without turning from his desk, thrust out a few sheets of paper and said:

"Look at these, Moore. Our first success, small though it is."

Putting the book aside and taking the papers from him, I found that they were a series of forms and releases that seemed to refer to a graveyard, and to two graves in particular; there was a note

concerning exhumation of bodies, and a nearly illegible document signed by one Abraham Zweig—

I was distracted by the unmistakable feeling of being watched. Turning, I saw a young girl of about twelve, with a round, pretty face that bore a somewhat frightened and slightly persecuted expression. She had taken up the book I'd laid down, and was glancing from me to the frontispiece as she fixed the top few buttons of a simple but clean dress. She read the small legend that explained the engraving, and apparently leapt to some unpleasant conclusions—her face grew fearful and she looked to Kreizler, while shying away from me.

Laszlo turned to her. "Ah, Berthe. Ready to leave?"

The girl pointed at the book uncertainly, then spoke in a tremor as she turned her finger on me: "Then…am *I* mad, too, Dr. Kreizler? And is this man going to put me in one of those places?"

"What?" Kreizler answered, taking the book away and giving me an admonishing look. "Mad? Ridiculous! We have only good news." Laszlo spoke to her as to any adult—directly, bluntly—but with a tone that he reserved for children: patient, kind, occasionally indulgent. "Come right over here." The girl approached him, and Kreizler helped her jump onto his knee. "You are a very healthy, very *intelligent* young lady." The girl blushed and laughed, quietly and happily. "Your difficulty stems from a series of small growths that are living in your nose and ears. These growths, unlike you, enjoy the fact that your house is *too blasted cold."* He tapped her head in time with these last words. "You shall have to see a doctor, who is a friend of mine, and have these growths removed. All of which can be done while you're having a very pleasant sleep. And as for this man"—he put Berthe back on the floor—"he is my friend, Mr. Moore. Say hello."

The girl curtsied ever so slightly, but did not speak. I bowed back. "Very pleased to meet you, Berthe."

She only laughed again, at which Laszlo made a ticking noise. "Enough of your giggling. Go and fetch your mother and we'll arrange everything."

The girl ran to the door and Kreizler tapped the papers in my hand with some excitement. "Fast work, eh, Moore? They arrived here not an hour ago."

"Who did?" I asked in bewilderment. "What did?"

“The Zweig children!” he answered quietly. “The ones in the water tower—I have their remains downstairs!”

It was so ghoulish a notion, and one so at odds with the rest of the activity in the Institute that day, that I couldn’t help but shudder. Before I could ask why in the world he should have done such a thing, however, the girl Berthe had brought her mother—the woman with the shawl—into the office. The woman exchanged a few words in Hungarian with Kreizler, but his knowledge of that language was limited (his German father had not wished his children to speak their mother’s tongue) and the conversation soon shifted back to English.

“Mrs. Rajk, you really must listen to me!” Laszlo said, exasperated.

“But, Doctor,” the woman protested, wringing her hands, “sometimes, you see, she understands good, and then I know she is being like a demon, tormenting us—”

“Mrs. Rajk, I’m not certain how many different ways I can explain this to you,” Kreizler said, making one more attempt at evenhandedness as he pulled his silver watch from his vest pocket and quickly looked at it. “Or in how many languages. The swelling is occasionally less marked, you see?” He pointed at his own ear, nose, and throat. “At such times she is in no pain, and can not only hear and speak but breathe easily. So she is alert and attentive. But most of the time the vegetations in the pharynx and the posterior nasal cavity—the throat, the nose—cover the eustachian tubes, connected to her ears, and generally make such an effort difficult, if not impossible. The fact that your flat is full of cold drafts aggravates the condition.” Kreizler put his hands on the young girl’s shoulders, and she smiled happily again. “In short, she is not doing any of this deliberately to torment either you or her instructor. Do you understand?” He leaned down into the mother’s face, giving her a close examination with the hawk’s eyes. “No. Obviously you do not. Well, then, you must simply accept my statement—there is nothing wrong with her mind *or* her soul. Take her to St. Luke’s. Dr. Osborne performs these procedures quite regularly, and I believe I can persuade him to lower his fee. By next fall”—he tousled the girl’s hair, and she looked up at him gratefully—“Berthe will be more than recovered and quite ready to excel at school. Correct, young lady?”

The girl didn’t answer, but let out another little laugh. The mother tried one more “But—” before Kreizler took her by the arm and hustled her out through the vestibule to the front door. “Really, Mrs. Rajk, that is enough. The fact that you cannot understand it does not

mean that it doesn't exist. Take her to Dr. Osborne! I shall consult with him, and if I find you have not obeyed me I shall be extremely angry." He closed the front door on them, turned back into the vestibule, and was immediately besieged by the remaining families. Shouting an announcement that there would be a short break in the interviewing, Kreizler retreated into the consulting room again and slammed the door.

"The great difficulty," he mumbled, as he returned to his secretary and began straightening papers, "of convincing people that the mental health of children must be better attended to is that more and more of them believe that their child's every little trouble betrays a momentous condition. Ah, well…" He closed the secretary and locked it, then turned. "Now, Moore. Down we go. Roosevelt's men should already be here. I asked Cyrus to bring them in directly through the ground-floor door."

"You're going to interview them *here*?" I asked, as we went through the examination room and escaped the families out front by way of a back door to the Institute's courtyard.

"In fact, I am not going to interview them at all," Kreizler answered, as the cold air hit us. "I will allow the Zweig children to do that. I will only study the results. And remember, Moore—not a word about what we're doing, until I'm sure these men are acceptable."

It had begun to snow lightly, and several of Kreizler's young patients—dressed in the Institute's simple gray and blue uniform, whose purpose was to help prevent differing economic backgrounds from creating friction between the children—had come out into the courtyard to play among the flakes. When they saw Kreizler they ran over to cheerfully but very respectfully greet him. Laszlo smiled back at them, and asked a few questions about their teachers and their schoolwork. A couple of the bolder students gave some frank answers about this or that teacher's appearance and bodily aromas, at which Laszlo admonished them, though not harshly. As we turned away and entered the ground-floor doorway, I heard joyful shouts start to echo off the courtyard walls once more, and thought of how recently many of these children had been on the streets and just a few short steps from Giorgio Santorelli's fate. More and more, my mind was seeing all things in relation to the case.

A dark, dank hallway led us to the operating theater, a very long room that was kept dry and warm by a gas space heater that hissed in one corner. The walls were smooth and whitewashed, and white

cabinets with glass doors ran along each wall, holding a collection of gruesome, glistening instruments. On white shelves above these were a collection of chilling models: realistically painted plaster casts of human and simian heads, with their skulls partly removed to reveal brain positioning and their faces still expressive of their death throes. Sharing the shelf space with these was a large collection of actual brains from a wide variety of creatures, housed in specimen jars full of formaldehyde. The remainder of the wall space was occupied by charts of human and animal nervous systems. In the center of the room were two steel operating tables, with channels for draining bodily fluids running down the center of their beds to the foot, where they emptied into steel receptacles on the floor. There were forms of roughly human dimensions on each of these tables, covered with sterile sheets. A pronounced aroma of animal decay and earth emanated from them.

Standing by the tables were two men, both wearing three-piece wool suits, the taller man's a subdued but fashionably checked pattern, the shorter's simple black. Their faces were almost totally obscured by the harsh glare of the electric operating lamps that were positioned above the tables and between us.

"Gentlemen," Laszlo said, moving directly toward them. "I am Dr. Kreizler. I hope you haven't been waiting long."

"Not at all, Doctor," said the taller man, shaking Kreizler's hand. As he leaned into the bright light around the table I could see that his Semitic features were quite handsome—strong nose, steady brown eyes, and a good head of curling hair. The shorter man, by contrast, had small eyes, a fleshy face that was beaded with sweat, and thinning hair. They both looked to be in their early thirties. "I'm Sergeant Marcus Isaacson," the taller man went on, "and this is my brother, Lucius."

The shorter man looked annoyed as he extended a hand. "*Detective Sergeant* Lucius Isaacson, Doctor," he said. Then, leaning back and speaking out of the side of his mouth, he murmured, "Don't do that again. You said you wouldn't."

Marcus Isaacson rolled his eyes, then tried to smile at us as he, too, spoke out of the side of his mouth. "What? What did I do?"

"Don't introduce me as your brother," Lucius Isaacson whispered urgently.

“Gentlemen,” Kreizler said, a little perplexed by this spat. “Allow me to introduce a friend of mine, John Schuyler Moore.” I shook hands with them both as Kreizler continued: “Commissioner Roosevelt speaks quite highly of your talents, and thinks you may be able to give me some assistance with a bit of research I’m doing. You have two areas of speciality that particularly interest me—”

“Yes,” Marcus said, “criminal science and forensic medicine.”

Kreizler went on: “First of all, I’d like to know—”

“If you’re wondering about our names,” Marcus interrupted, “our mother and father were very concerned, when they arrived in America, that their children not be subjected to anti-Jewish feeling in school.”

“We were relatively lucky,” Lucius added. “Our sister’s name is Cordelia.”

“You see,” Marcus continued, “they were learning English by studying Shakespeare. When I was born they’d just started, with *Julius Caesar*. A year later, they were still on it, and my brother came. But by the time our sister arrived, two years after that, they were making progress, and had gotten to *King Lear*—”

“I’ve no doubt, gentlemen,” Kreizler finished for him, ever more concerned and treating them fully to the arched eyebrows and the predatory gaze. “Interesting though that may be, what I had intended to ask was how you arrived at your areas of specialization, and what led you to the police force.”

Lucius sighed, looking up. “Nobody wants to hear how we got our names, Marcus,” he mumbled. “I’ve told you that.”

Marcus’s face went a little red with anger and then he addressed Kreizler with deliberate seriousness, sensing the meeting wasn’t going well. “Well, you see, Doctor, it was our parents again, though I do understand that it may not be a particularly interesting explanation. My mother wanted me to be a lawyer, and my brother—the *detective sergeant* here—he was supposed to be a doctor. It didn’t work out. We’d started reading Wilkie Collins when we were boys, and had pretty well decided by the time we went to college that we wanted to be detectives.”

“Law and medical training were useful, at first,” Lucius continued, “but then we moved on and did some work for the Pinkertons. It

wasn't until Commissioner Roosevelt took over the department that we actually got a chance to join the police. I suppose you've heard that his hiring practices are a bit…unorthodox."

I knew what he was referring to, and later explained it to Laszlo. Besides investigating nearly every officer and detective in the Police Department, and thus prompting many to resign, Roosevelt had made a point of hiring unlikely new recruits, in an effort to break the hold that the clique headed by Thomas Byrnes and such precinct heads as "Clubber" Williams and "Big Bill" Devery had on the force. Theodore was especially fond of bringing in Jews, whom he considered exceptionally honest and brave, referring to them as "Maccabean warriors for justice." The Isaacson brothers were apparently representative of this effort, though "warriors" was not the first word that came to mind on meeting them.

"I take it," Lucius ventured hopefully, wanting to get off the subject of their backgrounds, "that you want some help with this exhumation?" He indicated the two tables.

Kreizler studied him. "How did you know it's an exhumation?"

"The smell, Doctor. It's very distinct. And the positions of the bodies indicate a formal burial, not a random interment."

Kreizler liked that, and brightened a bit. "Yes, Detective Sergeant, you have presumed correctly." He moved over and whipped the sheets off the tables, at which point the stench was complemented by the rather disturbing sight of two small skeletons, one draped in a decaying black suit and the other in an equally decrepit white dress. Some bones were still connected, but many had come free of one another, and there were bits of hair and nails, along with spatterings of dirt, all over them. I tightened up and tried not to look away: this sort of thing was going to be my fate for a while, and I figured that I'd better get used to it. But the grisly grimaces of the two skulls spoke eloquently of the unnatural way in which the two children had died, and it was hard to continue examining them.

The Isaacson brothers' faces displayed nothing but fascination as they approached the tables and listened to Laszlo: "Brother and sister, Benjamin and Sofia Zweig. Murdered. Their bodies found—"

"In a water tower," Marcus said. "Three years ago. The case is still officially open."

This, too, pleased Kreizler. "Over here," he continued, indicating a

small white table in the corner that was piled with clippings and documents, “you’ll find all the information concerning the case that I’ve been able to assemble. I should like the two of you to review it, and study the bodies. There is some urgency about the matter, so I can only offer you the afternoon and evening. I will be at Delmonico’s at eleven-thirty tonight. Meet me there, and in exchange for your information I shall be happy to offer you an excellent dinner.”

Marcus Isaacson’s enthusiasm broke for a moment of curiosity. “Dinner isn’t necessary, Doctor, if this is official business. Though we appreciate the offer.”

Laszlo nodded with a slight smile, amused at Marcus’s attempt to draw him out. “We’ll see you at eleven-thirty, then.”

At that the Isaacsons started in on the materials before them, barely conscious of Kreizler’s and my farewells. We went upstairs, and as I fetched my coat from the consultation room, Laszlo continued to look intrigued.

“There’s no doubting they’re idiosyncratic,” he said as he walked me to the front door. “But I’ve a feeling they know their work. We shall see. Oh, by the way, Moore—do you have a clean set of clothes for tonight?”

“Tonight?” I asked, pulling my cap and gloves on.

“The opera,” he replied. “Roosevelt’s candidate for liaison between our investigation and his office is due to meet us at my house at seven.”

“Who is he?”

“No idea,” Laszlo said with a shrug. “But whoever it is, the liaison’s role will be crucial. I thought we’d take him to the opera, and see how he reacts. It’s as good a test of character as any, and God knows when we’ll get another chance to go. We’ll use my box at the Metropolitan. Maurel is singing Rigoletto. It should suit our purpose.”

“It certainly should,” I said happily. “And speaking of purposes, who’s singing the hunchback’s daughter?”

Kreizler turned away with an expression of mild disgust. “My God, Moore, I should like to get the particulars of your infancy someday. This irrepressible sexual mania—”

“I only asked who’s singing the hunchback’s daughter!”

“All right, all right! Yes, Frances Saville, ‘She of the Legs,’ as you put it!”

“In that case,” I said, bouncing down the steps and toward the carriage, “I definitely have clothes.” As far as I was concerned, you could take Nellie Melba, Lillian Nordica, and all the rest of the half-attractive, four-star voices at the Metropolitan and, as Stevie Taggert would have put it, go chase yourself. Give me a really beautiful girl with a decent voice and I was a docile audience member. “I’ll be at your place at seven.”

“Splendid,” Kreizler answered with a frown. “I can scarcely wait. Cyrus! Take Mr. Moore to Washington Square!”

I spent the quick trip back up and across town pondering what an unusual—but nonetheless enjoyable—way to open a murder investigation the opera and dinner at Delmonico’s would be. Unfortunately, such entertainments did not turn out to be said opening; for when I arrived home, I found a very agitated Sara Howard on my doorstep.

CHAPTER 8

Sara paid no attention to my greeting. “This is Dr. Kreizler’s carriage, isn’t it?” she asked. “And his man. Can we take them?”

“Take them where?” I answered, looking up to see my grandmother peering anxiously out the window of her parlor. “Sara, what’s going on?”

“Sergeant Connor and another man, Casey, went down to talk to the Santorelli boy’s parents this morning. They returned and said they’d found nothing—but there was blood on the cuff of Connor’s shirt. Something’s happened, I know it, and I want to find out what.” She wasn’t looking at me, perhaps because she knew what my reaction was likely to be.

“A little off the beaten trail for a secretary, isn’t it?” I asked. Sara didn’t answer, but a look of bitter disappointment filled her face, a frustration so severe that all I could do was open the calash door. “What about it, Cyrus?” I said. “Any objection to taking Miss Howard and myself on a little errand?”

Cyrus shrugged. “No, sir. Not so long as I’m back at the Institute by the end of interviewing hours.”

“And so you shall be. Climb aboard, Sara, and meet Mr. Cyrus Montrose.”

In an instant Sara’s aspect went from ferocious to exuberant—not an uncommon transformation for her. “There are moments, John,” she said, jumping up onto the calash, “when I think I may have been wrong about you all these years.” She shook Cyrus’s hand eagerly and then sat down, throwing a blanket over my legs and hers when I got

in. Directing Cyrus to an address on Mott Street, she clapped her hands once excitedly as the calash began moving.

There aren't many women who would have ventured into one of the worst parts of the Lower East Side with such relish. But Sara's adventurous spirit had never been much tempered by prudence. Furthermore, she had experience with the area: right after Sara's graduation from college, her family had gotten the idea that her education might be fully balanced by some firsthand experience of life in places other than Rhinebeck (where the Howards' country estate was located) and Gramercy Park. So she put on a starched white blouse, a dreary black skirt, and a rather ridiculous boater and spent the summer assisting a visiting nurse in the Tenth Ward. During those months she saw a great deal—most, indeed, of what the Lower East Side could throw at a person. None of it, however, was any worse than what we were bound for that day.

The Santorellis lived in a rear tenement a few blocks below Canal Street. Rear tenements had been outlawed in 1894, but there had been a grandfather clause in the bill, so that those that already existed were allowed to remain standing with minimal improvement. Suffice it to say that if a tenement building that fronted the street was dark, disease-ridden, and threatening, the smaller buildings that often stood behind them—in place of a yard that might have brought at least a bit more air and light to the block—were exponentially more so. By the look of the particular front tenement we pulled up before that day, we were in for a typical experience: huge barrels of ash and waste stood by the urine-soaked stoop of the structure, on which was gathered a group of filthy, rag-clad men, each indistinguishable from the next. They were drinking and laughing among themselves, but they stopped abruptly at the sight of the calash and Cyrus. Sara and I stepped out and onto the curb.

"Don't wander too far, Cyrus," I said, trying not to betray my jitters.

"No, sir," he answered, gripping the pommel of his horse-whip tightly. With his other hand he reached into the pocket of his greatcoat. "Perhaps you should take these, Mr. Moore." He produced a set of brass knuckles.

"Hmm," I noised, studying the weapon. "I don't think that'll be necessary." Then I dropped the sham. "Besides, I wouldn't know how to use them."

"Hurry, John," Sara said, and then we mounted the stoop.

“Here!” One of the loitering men grabbed my arm. “D’you know there’s a coon driving your rig?”

“Is there?” I answered, guiding Sara through the almost visible stench that hovered around the men.

“Black as the ace of spades!” another of the men asserted, seemingly astonished.

“Remarkable,” I replied, as Sara got inside. Before I could follow, the first man grabbed me again.

“You’re not another cop, are you?” he asked menacingly.

“Absolutely not,” I answered. “I despise cops.”

The man nodded once but said nothing, from which I divined that I was allowed to pass.

To get to the rear building it was necessary to navigate the pitch-black hallway of the front structure: always an unsettling experience. With Sara in the lead we felt our way along the filthy walls, trying but failing to adjust to the lack of light. I started when Sara stumbled on something; and I started even more violently when that something began to wail.

“Good lord, John,” Sara said after a moment. “It’s a baby.”

I still couldn’t see a thing, but as I got closer the smell gave it away —a baby, all right, and the poor creature must have been covered in its own excrement.

“We’ve got to get it help,” Sara said, and I thought of the men on the stoop. When I looked back toward the front door, however, I saw them silhouetted against the snowfall outside, swinging sticks as they watched us, and occasionally laughing in a very unpleasant way. There would be no help from that quarter, so I began to try doors inside the hall. Finally finding one that would open, I pulled Sara toward and through it.

Inside were an old man and woman, ragpickers, who would only accept the baby after I offered them a half-dollar. They told us that the infant belonged to a couple across the hall who were out, as they were every day and night, jabbing morphine and drinking in a dive around the corner. The old man assured us that they would get the baby something to eat and clean it up, at which Sara gave them another

dollar. Neither of us was under any illusions as to how much good a cleaning and feeding would do the child in the long run (I suppose you could argue that we were simply easing our own consciences), but it was one of those all-too-common moments in New York when one is faced with a damnable set of options.

Finally, we reached the back door. The alleyway between the front and rear buildings was overflowing with more barrels and buckets full of garbage and sewage, and the smell was indescribable. Sara placed a handkerchief over her nose and mouth and told me to do the same. Then we ran across to the ground-floor hallway of the rear building. There were four apartments with what seemed like a thousand people living in them on the first floor. I tried to identify all the languages being spoken, but lost count at about eight. A smelly collection of Germans with growlers of beer were camped on the staircase, and they parted grudgingly as we went up. It was evident, even in the half-light, that the stairs were coated with almost an inch of something extremely sticky that I didn't want to investigate. It didn't seem to bother the Germans.

The Santorelli flat was on the second floor in the back: the darkest spot in the whole building. When we knocked, a small, horribly thin woman with sunken eyes answered the door, speaking the Sicilian dialect. I knew only enough Italian for the opera, but Sara was better off—again because of her nursing days—and communicated quite easily. Mrs. Santorelli was not at all alarmed to see Sara (in fact she seemed to have been expecting her); but she expressed much concern over my presence, fearfully demanding to know if I was either a policeman or a journalist. Sara had to think fast, and said I was her assistant. Mrs. Santorelli looked puzzled at that, but finally let us in.

"Sara," I said as we entered, "do you know this woman?"

"No," she answered, "but she seems to know me. Strange."

The flat was composed of two rooms without any real windows, just small slits that had recently been cut in the walls to comply with new tenement regulations concerning ventilation. The Santorellis had rented one of the rooms to another family of Sicilians, which meant that six of them—the parents and Giorgio's four brothers and sisters—lived in a space about nine feet by sixteen. There was nothing hanging on the bare, soot-encrusted walls, and two big buckets in the corners took care of sanitation. The family also had a kerosene stove, of the inexpensive type that so often used to put an end to such buildings.

Lying on an old, stained mattress in one corner and wrapped in what blankets they had was the cause of Mrs. Santorelli's great agitation: her husband. His face was cut, bruised, and swollen, and his forehead was drenched in sweat. There was a bloody rag lying next to him, and, incongruously, a bound wad of money, which must have amounted to several hundred dollars. Mrs. Santorelli took up the wad, shoved it at Sara, and then urged her at the husband, tears starting to stream down her face.

We soon discovered that Mrs. Santorelli believed Sara to be a nurse. She had dispatched her four children to find one only an hour earlier. Again thinking quickly, Sara sat and began to examine Santorelli, quickly discovering that one of his arms was fractured. In addition, most of his torso was covered in bruises.

"John," Sara said firmly, "send Cyrus for bandages, disinfectant, and some morphine. Tell him we'll want a good clean piece of wood to use as a splint, as well."

In what seemed one movement I was out the door, through the Germans and the alleyway, and down the stoop to the curb. I shouted the order to Cyrus, who sped off in the calash, and as I went back through the men on the stoop one of them held a hand to my chest.

"Just a minute," he said. "What's all that for?"

"Mr. Santorelli," I answered. "He's badly hurt."

The man spat hard at the street. "Damned cops. I hate those damned guineas, but I'll tell you, I hate cops more!"

This recurring theme seemed once again to be the signal for me to proceed. Back upstairs, Sara had gotten hold of some hot water and was washing Santorelli's wounds. The wife was still chattering, waving her hands and occasionally bursting into tears.

"There were six men, John," Sara said to me, after listening for a few minutes.

"Six?" I echoed. "I thought you said two."

Sara indicated the bed with a jerk of her head. "Come over here and help me—she'll be suspicious, otherwise." Sitting down, I found that it was difficult to say which smelled worse, the mattress or Santorelli. But none of it seemed to bother Sara. "Connor and Casey were definitely here," she said. "Along with two other men and two

priests."

"Priests?" I said, taking up a hot compress. "What in hell—"

"One Catholic, apparently, and one not. She can't be more specific about the second. The priests had the money. They told the Santorellis to use some of it to pay for a decent burial for Giorgio. The rest was a —consideration, apparently for silence. They told her not to allow anyone to exhume Giorgio's body, even the police, and not to talk to anyone about the matter—especially any journalists."

"Priests?" I said again, wiping at one of Santorelli's welts with no great enthusiasm. "What did they look like?"

Sara put the question, then translated the answer. "One short, with large white sideburns—that was the Catholic—and one thin with spectacles."

"Why in the world would two priests have any interest in this?" I wondered. "And why would they want to keep the police out of it? You say Connor and Casey were here for that conversation?"

"Apparently."

"So whatever's going on, they're involved. Well, Theodore will be happy to hear that. Two more vacancies in the Division of Detectives, I'll wager. But who were the other two men?"

Again, Sara put the question to Mrs. Santorelli, who rattled off an answer that Sara didn't seem to comprehend. She asked again, but got the same reply.

"I may not understand this dialect as well as I thought," Sara said. "She says the other two *weren't* policemen, but then she says that they *were* policemen. I don't—"

Sara stopped and we all turned when a loud knock came at the door. Mrs. Santorelli shied away from it, and I was in no hurry to thrust myself into the breach; but Sara said, "Oh, go on, John, don't be foolish. It's probably Cyrus."

I stepped to the door and opened it. Outside in the hall was one of the men from the stoop. He held up a package.

"Your medicines," he said with a grin. "We don't allow no coons in this building."

"Ah," I said, accepting the package. "I see. Thank you."

Giving the goods to Sara, I sat back down on the bed. Santorelli was by this time semiconscious and Sara administered some of the morphine: she intended to set his arm, a trick she'd learned during her days with the visiting nurses. The break was not bad, she said, but it nonetheless made a somewhat nauseating cracking sound as she got it back into place. Between his grogginess and the drug, however, Santorelli didn't seem to feel a thing, though his wife let out a nice little howl and some kind of a prayer. I began wiping disinfectant on the other wounds while Sara continued her conversation with Mrs. Santorelli.

"It seems," Sara said at length, "that Santorelli got very indignant. Threw the money in the priests' faces, and said he demanded that the police find the murderer of his son. At that point the priests left, and…"

"Yes," I said. *"And."* I was well aware of how Irish cops generally dealt with a lack of cooperation from the non-English-speaking population. A good example of the technique was lying next to me.

Sara shook her head. "It's all so strange," she sighed, starting to apply gauze to some of the worst cuts and bruises. "Santorelli nearly got himself killed—yet he hasn't seen Giorgio for four years. The boy's been living on the streets."

Mrs. Santorelli's trust had been inspired by Sara's care for her husband, and once she began to tell us the story of her son Giorgio, it would have been difficult to stop her. Sara and I kept laboring over Santorelli's wounds as though they were the primary center of our attention, but our thoughts were very much fixed on the peculiar story we heard.

Giorgio was a shy boy in his early years, but smart and determined enough to attend the public school on Hester Street and get good marks. Starting at about age seven, however, there was a problem with some other boys at school. The older ones were apparently able to persuade Giorgio to perform sexual acts, ones that Mrs. Santorelli didn't much want to define. Sara pressed her on the issue, however, sensing that such information would be important, and we found that it involved sodomy of both the anal and oral varieties. The behavior was discovered and reported to the parents by a teacher. The Latin concept of masculinity being as broad and forgiving as it is, Giorgio's father nearly lost his mind, and took to beating the boy at regular

intervals. Mrs. Santorelli demonstrated for us how her husband would bind Giorgio by his wrists to the front door, then whip him across the backside with a wide belt, which she also showed us. It was a cruel implement, and in Santorelli's hands it apparently inflicted such damage that Giorgio sometimes avoided school altogether, simply because he couldn't sit down.

The odd thing, however, was that instead of becoming more compliant, Giorgio only grew more willful every time he got a whipping. After months of such punishment, his behavior progressed to an extreme: he began to stay away from the family's flat for nights at a time, and gave up school altogether. Then one day the parents spotted him on a street west of Washington Square, wearing ladies' cosmetics and hawking himself like any street cruiser. Santorelli confronted the boy, and said that if he ever returned home he'd kill him. Giorgio screamed angry insults in return, and the father was getting ready to attack him right then and there when another man—probably Giorgio's panderer—stepped in and advised the Santorellis to disappear. That was the last they ever saw of their son, until they viewed his mangled body at the morgue.

The tale roused many questions in my mind, and I could see that Sara felt the same. We would never get to ask them. Just as we were wrapping Santorelli back up in the worn, dirty blankets in which we'd found him, a booming came at the door; and I, thinking it was the men from the stoop, opened it. In an instant, two large, mustachioed thugs in suits and bowlers had forced their way into the flat. The mere sight of them sent Mrs. Santorelli into hysterics.

"Who the hell're you people?" one of the thugs demanded.

Sara made a brave show of saying that she was a nurse; but the explanation that I was her assistant, which had worked so admirably on a desperate woman who didn't speak English, went nowhere with these two.

"Assistant, eh?" the thug said, as they both moved on me. Sara and I carefully edged our way to the door of the flat. "That's a hell of a rig out there, for an assistant!"

"Well, I do value your opinion," I said with a smile; then I grabbed Sara and we flew down the stairs. Never have I been so grateful that the girl was of an athletic disposition, for even in her skirt she was faster than our pursuers. Such did not help, however, when we reached the hall of the front building and saw the men on the stoop

blocking our exit. They began moving our way, slapping their sticks in the palms of their hands ominously.

"John," Sara said, "are they really trying to trap us?" Her voice was, I remember thinking, damned steady—which, given the circumstances, I found extremely irritating.

"Of *course* they're trying to trap us, woman!" I said, breathing hard. "You and your detective games, we're going to get beaten to death! Cyrus!" I cupped my hands and bellowed at the front door as the men began to move our way. "Cyrus!" I let my hands fall, despondent. "Where in hell *is* the man?"

Sara only clutched her bag tightly without a word; and when the two thugs in the bowlers appeared at the rear end of the hall, apparently sealing our fates, she reached into it. "Don't worry, John," she said confidently. "I won't let anything happen to you." And with that she withdrew a .45-caliber Army Model Colt revolver, with a four-and-a-half-inch barrel and pearl grips. Sara was what you might call a firearms enthusiast; but I was not reassured.

"Oh, my God," I said, ever more alarmed. "Sara, you can't just blast away in a dark hallway, you don't know what you'll hit—"

"Can you suggest a better idea?" she said, looking around, realizing that I was right and feeling alarm for the first time.

"Well, I—"

But it was too late: the men from the stoop were upon us in a screaming rush. I grabbed Sara and covered her with my body, hoping she wouldn't shoot me in the gut during the ensuing attack.

You can imagine my shock when that attack failed to materialize. We were momentarily buffeted by the men with sticks, but that was only as they passed. Still screaming, they fell on the two thugs behind us with rare ferocity. Given the odds, it wasn't much of a contest: we heard a few seconds of shouting, grunting, and wrestling, and then the hall was filled with heavy breathing and a few moans. Sara and I got out onto the stoop and then raced to the calash, where Cyrus stood waiting.

"Cyrus!" I said. "Are you aware that we could've been killed in there?"

"It didn't seem very likely, Mr. Moore," he answered calmly. "Not

given what those men were saying before they went it."

"And what was that, pray tell?" I asked, still not satisfied with his attitude.

Before he could answer the bodies of the two thugs came flying out the door of the tenement, hitting the snowy pavement hard. Their bowlers followed. The men were unconscious, and in a general condition that made Mr. Santorelli look a picture of health. Our friends with the sticks followed triumphantly, even though a few of them had taken some hard knocks, too. The one who'd spoken to me earlier looked over at us, producing huge frosty clouds as he breathed hard.

"I may hate coons," he said with a grin. "But, damnation, I do hate cops more!"

"That," Cyrus murmured, "was what they were saying."

I looked at the thugs on the ground. "Cops?" I said to the man by the stoop.

"*Ex*-cops," he answered, walking toward me. "Used to be roundsmen in this neighborhood. They've got a hell of a nerve, coming back to a building like this." I nodded, looking at the unconscious bodies on the sidewalk before me, and then signaled thanks to the man. "Your honor," he said, indicating his mouth, "that was thirsty work." I pulled out some coins and threw them to him. He tried but failed to catch the money, at which his mates fell grabbing to the ground. They were soon at each other's throats. Sara and I got into the calash, and in a few minutes Cyrus had us on Broadway, heading uptown.

Sara was full of good cheer, now that we were safe, and she fairly leapt around the carriage, recalling each dangerous moment of our expedition rapturously. I smiled and nodded, glad that she'd been able to have a moment of positive action; but my mind was on something else. I was going over what Mrs. Santorelli had said, and trying to examine it as Kreizler would have. There was something in the tale of young Giorgio that reminded me of Laszlo's account of the children in the water tower; something very important, though I couldn't quite put my finger—and then I had it. The behavior. Kreizler had described two troublesome children, embarrassments to their family—and I had just been told about another such youth. All three, in Kreizler's hypothesis, had met their ends at the hands of the same man. Was this

apparent similarity of character a factor in their deaths, or simply a coincidence? It might have been the latter. But somehow I didn't think Kreizler would find it so…

Lost in these thoughts, I didn't quite hear Sara asking me a rather stunning question; but when she repeated it, the outlandishness of the notion became clear even to my distracted mind. We'd been through a great deal, however, that day, and I could not find it in me to disappoint her.

CHAPTER 9

I got to Kreizler's house, at 283 East Seventeenth Street, a few minutes early, white-tied and caped and not at all sure of the conspiracy I'd entered into with Sara—a conspiracy that for better or worse would now play out. The snow had deepened to several inches, forming a quiet, pleasant layer over the bare shrubs and iron fences of Stuyvesant Park, across the street from Laszlo's house. Opening the small gate to his similarly small front yard, I walked to the door and gently rapped the brass knocker. The French windows of the parlor, one story up, were slightly ajar, and I could hear Cyrus at the piano, giving forth with "Pari siamo" from *Rigoletto*—Kreizler was warming his ears up for the evening.

The door opened, bringing me face-to-face with the skittish, uniformed figure of Mary Palmer, Laszlo's maid and housekeeper. Mary rounded out the list of former patients who had entered Kreizler's service, and she was yet another who made the visitor who knew her full story a bit uneasy. Beautifully built, with a bewitching face and sky-blue eyes, Mary had been considered idiotic by her family since birth. She could not speak coherently, putting words and syllables together in unintelligible jumbles, and so was never taught to read or write. Her mother and father, the latter a respected schoolmaster in Brooklyn, had trained her to perform menial household functions, and seemed to care for her adequately; but one day in 1884, when she was seventeen, Mary chained her father to his brass bed while the rest of the family was out, and then set fire to the house. The father died a horrible death; and since there was no apparent reason for the attack, Mary was involuntarily committed to the Lunatic Asylum on Blackwells Island.

There she was discovered by Kreizler, who occasionally did consulting work on the island where he had found his first

employment. Laszlo was struck by the fact that Mary lacked most, if not all, of the symptoms of dementia praecox, the only condition that, in his opinion, constituted true insanity. (The term is currently being supplanted, Laszlo says quite rightly, by Dr. Eugene Bleuler's label "schizophrenia"; as I understand it, the word denotes a pathological inability to either recognize or interact with the reality around one.) Kreizler began to try to communicate with the girl, and soon discovered that in fact she suffered from classic motor aphasia, complicated by agraphia: she could understand words and think in clear sentences, but those parts of her mind that controlled speech and writing were badly damaged. Like most such unfortunates, Mary was bitterly aware of her difficulty, but lacked the ability to explain it (or anything else) to others. Kreizler was able to communicate by asking questions that Mary could answer with the simplest of statements—often just "yes" or "no"—and he taught her as much of rudimentary writing as her condition would permit. Weeks of work brought him to a new and shocking understanding of her history: apparently, her own father had been sexually violating her for years before the killing, but she, of course, had been unable to relate this fact to anyone.

Kreizler had demanded a legal review of the case, and Mary was eventually freed. Afterwards, she managed to convey to Laszlo the idea that she would make an ideal house servant. Knowing that the girl's chances of an independent life were otherwise slim, Kreizler had taken her on, and now she not only maintained but jealously guarded his home. The effect of her presence, combined with those of Cyrus Montrose and Stevie Taggert, was to temper my mood whenever I visited that elegant house on Seventeenth Street. Despite the place's collection of contemporary and classic art and splendid French furniture, as well as the grand piano out of which Cyrus perpetually coaxed fine music, I had never been able when there to fully elude the awareness that I was surrounded by thieves and killers, each of whom had a very good explanation for his or her acts but none of whom gave the impression of being willing to put up with questionable behavior from anyone else ever again.

"Hello, Mary," I said, handling her my cape. She gave me a small dip on one knee in reply, looking at the floor. "I'm early. Is Dr. Kreizler dressed?"

"No, sir," she said with deliberate effort. Her face filled with the simultaneous relief and frustration that were characteristic when her words came out correctly: relief at having succeeded, frustration at not being able to say more. She opened an arm sheathed in billowy blue linen toward the stairs, and then moved to hang my cape on a

nearby rack.

“Well, then, I guess I’ll have a drink and enjoy Cyrus’s exceptional singing,” I said.

I took the stairs two at a time, feeling a bit confined in my evening clothes, then entered the parlor. Cyrus nodded to me and kept singing, while I anxiously fetched a silver cigarette box off the marble mantel over the very warm fireplace. Removing one of the tasty blends of Virginia and Russian black tobacco, I drew a match from a smaller silver case on the mantel and lit it.

Kreizler came trotting down the stairs from above, in a set of white tie and tails that were impeccably cut. “No sign of Roosevelt’s man?” he said, just as Mary appeared with a silver tray. On it were four ounces of sevruga caviar, some thin slices of toast, a bottle of ice-cold vodka, and several small, frosted glasses: a thoroughly admirable habit Kreizler had picked up during a trip to St. Petersburg.

“None,” I answered, stubbing out my cigarette and eagerly attacking the tray.

“Well, I’ll want punctuality from everyone involved,” he pronounced, checking the time. “And if he doesn’t…”

At that the door knocker downstairs clicked several times, and the sounds of entrance filtered up the stairs. Kreizler nodded. “That, at least, is a good sign. Cyrus—something a little less grim, I think. ‘Di provenza il mar.’”

Cyrus followed the instruction, launching softly into the gentle Verdi tune. I swallowed my caviar in an anxious gulp, and then Mary entered again. Her aspect was somewhat uncertain, even mildly agitated, and she tried but failed to announce our guest. As she hustled away to the back of the house with another small bend of her knee, a figure strode out of the dark stairway and into the parlor: Sara.

“Good evening, Dr. Kreizler,” she said, the folds of her emerald-green and peacock-blue evening dress making small whispering sounds as she came into the room.

Kreizler was somewhat taken aback. “Miss Howard,” he said, his eyes clearly delighted but his voice perplexed. “This is a pleasant surprise. Have you brought our liaison?” There was a long pause. Kreizler looked from Sara to me and then back at Sara. His expression

did not change as he began to nod. “Ah. *You* are our liaison—correct?”

For a moment Sara looked unsure of herself. “I don’t want you to think that I simply badgered the commissioner into this. We discussed it thoroughly.”

“I was there, too,” I said quickly, though a bit unsteadily. “And when you hear the story of our afternoon, Kreizler, you’ll have no doubt that Sara’s the right person for the job.”

“It does make practical sense, Doctor,” Sara added. “No one will notice my activities when I’m at Mulberry Street, and my absences will be even less of a cause for curiosity. There aren’t many other people at headquarters who could say the same. I have a decent background in criminology, and I have access to places and people you and John might not—as we saw today.”

“It seems I missed a great deal today,” Kreizler said, in an ambiguous tone.

“Finally,” Sara continued, hesitant in the face of Laszlo’s coolness, “in the event of trouble…” She quickly pulled a small Colt Number One Derringer from a large muff she wore on her left hand and pointed it at the fireplace. “You’ll find that I’m a better shot than John.”

I took a quick step away from the gun, prompting Kreizler to chuckle once abruptly; Sara apparently thought he was laughing at her, and bridled a bit.

“I assure you, I’m quite serious, Doctor. My father was an expert marksman. My mother, however, was an invalid, and I had no siblings. I therefore became my father’s hunting and trapshooting partner.” All of which was perfectly true. Stephen Hamilton Howard had lived the life of a true country squire on his estate near Rhinebeck, and had trained his only child to ride, shoot, gamble, and drink with any Hudson Valley gentleman—which meant that Sara could do all those things well, and in volume. She indicated the small, delicately engraved pistol in her hand. “Most people consider the derringer a weak weapon; but this one holds a forty-one-caliber bullet, and could knock your man at the piano through the window behind him.”

Kreizler turned toward Cyrus, as if expecting the man to register some sort of alarm—but there was no break in his gentle rendition of

“Di provenza il mar.” Laszlo took note of that.

“Not that I prefer this kind of gun,” Sara finished, putting it back in the muff. “But…” She took a deep breath, swelling the pale, bare flesh above the low neckline of her dress. “We *are* going to the opera.” She touched the lovely emerald necklace she was wearing and smiled for the first time. Vintage Sara, I thought, and then I swallowed an entire glass of vodka.

There was another long pause, during which Kreizler’s and Sara’s eyes stayed locked. Then Laszlo looked away, becoming his usual frenetic self. “Indeed we are,” he said, picking up a bit of caviar and a glass and handing them to Sara. “And if we don’t hurry, we shall miss the ‘Questa o quella.’ Cyrus, will you see if Stevie has the barouche ready?” At that, Cyrus was up and making for the stairs, but Kreizler caught him. “And, Cyrus—this is Miss Howard.”

“Yes, sir, Doctor,” Cyrus answered. “We’ve met.”

“Ah,” Kreizler said. “Then it will come as no surprise to learn that she will be working with us?”

“No, sir.” Cyrus gave Sara a slight bow. “Miss Howard,” he said. She nodded and smiled back, and then Cyrus continued his progress to the stairs.

“So Cyrus was involved, as well,” Kreizler said, as Sara drank her vodka quickly yet gracefully. “I confess my interest is piqued. On our way uptown you two must tell me all about this mysterious expedition to—where *did* you go?”

“The Santorellis’,” I answered, taking a last mouthful of caviar. “And we have come away loaded with useful information.”

“The Santo—” Kreizler was genuinely impressed, and suddenly much more serious. “But…where? How? You must tell me everything, *everything*—the keys will be in the details!”

Sara and Laszlo walked in front of me down the staircase, chatting as if this development had been expected all along. I breathed deeply in relief, for I hadn’t known how Kreizler would react to Sara’s proposal, and then put another cigarette to my mouth. Before I could light it, however, I was momentarily unnerved again, this time by the unexpected sight of Mary Palmer’s face, which appeared through a crack in the dining room door as I passed. Her wide, pretty eyes were locked on Sara apprehensively, and she seemed to be trembling.

"Things," I whispered to the girl reassuringly, "are likely to be a little unusual around here, Mary. For the foreseeable future." She didn't seem to hear me, but made a small sound and then ran away from the door.

Outside the snow was still falling. The larger of Kreizler's two carriages, a burgundy barouche with black trim, was waiting. Stevie Taggert had hitched up Frederick and another, matching gelding. Sara, pulling the hood of her cowl up, moved through the front yard and accepted Cyrus's help getting into the vehicle. Kreizler held me back at the front door.

"An extraordinary woman, Moore," he whispered matter-of-factly.

I nodded. "Just don't cross her," I murmured back. "Her nerves are strung like piano wire."

"Yes, that's apparent," he said. "The father she speaks of—he's dead."

"Hunting accident. Eight years ago. They were very close—in fact, she spent some time in a sanatorium afterwards." I didn't know whether I should divulge all, but given our situation it seemed advisable. "Some people said it was suicide, but she denies it. Hotly. So that's a subject you might want to stay away from."

Kreizler nodded and pulled on his gloves, watching Sara all the while. "Women of such temperament," he said as we moved to the carriage, "do not seem fated for happiness in our society. But her capabilities are obvious."

We got inside the barouche, and Sara began to eagerly relate the details of our interview with Mrs. Santorelli. As we made our way through the snow-quieted streets south of Gramercy Park toward Broadway, Kreizler listened without comment, his fidgeting hands the only evidence of his excitement; but by the time we reached Herald Square, where the sounds of human bustling became much louder around the elevated train station, he was full of detailed questions that tested our memories to the utmost. Laszlo's curiosity was roused by the strange tale of the two ex-cops and the two priests who had accompanied Roosevelt's detectives, but he had far more interest (as I had suspected he would) in young Giorgio's sexual behavior and in the boy's character more generally. "One of the first ways in which we can know our quarry is to know his victims," Kreizler said, and as we pulled up under the large electric globes that lit the porte-cochere

awning of the Metropolitan Opera House he asked Sara and me what sense of the boy we had formed. Each of us needed to think about that one for a bit, and we grew quiet and pensive as Stevie drove off with the barouche and Cyrus accompanied us through the doors of the porte-cochere entrance.

To the old guard of New York society, the Metropolitan Opera was "that yellow brewery uptown." This terse dismissal was prompted, on the most obvious level, by the boxiness of the building's Early Renaissance architecture and the color of the bricks used in its construction; but the attitude behind the comment was sparked by the Metropolitan's upstart history. Occupying the block bounded by Broadway, Seventh Avenue, and Thirty-ninth and Fortieth streets, the Metropolitan, which opened in 1883, had been paid for by seventy-five of New York's most famous (and infamous) nouveaux riches: men with names like Morgan, Gould, Whitney, and Vanderbilt, none of whom were deemed by the old Knickerbocker clans to be socially acceptable enough to warrant selling them boxes at the venerable Academy of Music on Fourteenth Street. In reply to this unstated yet very apparent assessment of their worth, the founders of the Metropolitan had ordered not one or two tiers of boxes for their new house, but three; and the social wars that were waged in them before, during, and after performances were as vicious as anything that occurred downtown. In spite of all this backbiting, however, the impresarios who managed the Metropolitan, Henry Abbey and Maurice Grau, had brought together some of the best operatic talents in the world; and an evening at the "yellow brewery" was, by 1896, fast becoming a musical experience that no other house or company in the world could surpass.

As we entered the relatively small main vestibule, which had none of the opulence of its various European counterparts, we got the usual stares from several broad-minded souls who were not happy to see Kreizler accompanied by a black man. Most, however, had seen Cyrus before and endured his presence with weary familiarity. We moved up the tight, angular main staircase at a quick pace, and were among the last people to enter the auditorium. Kreizler's box was on the left-hand side of the second tier of the "Diamond Horseshoe" (as the boxes were known), and we rushed through the red velvet saloon to get to our seats. As we settled in, the houselights began to fade. I pulled out a small set of foldable glasses, and just had time to check the boxes around and across from us for familiar faces. I got a quick glimpse of Theodore and Mayor Strong having what seemed a very grave conversation in the Roosevelt box, and then I cast my eyes on the dead center of the horseshoe, box 35, where that formidable financial

octopus with the malignant nose—J. Pierpont Morgan—sat amid shadows. There were several ladies with him, but before I could ascertain who they were, the house went black.

Victor Maurel, the great Gascon baritone and actor for whom Verdi had written some of his most memorable parts, was in rare form that night, though I fear that we in Kreizler's box—with the possible exception of Cyrus—were too preoccupied with other matters to fully appreciate the performance. During the first intermission our conversation turned quickly from music back to the Santorelli case. Sara wondered at the fact that the beatings Giorgio received from his father actually seemed to increase the boy's desire to pursue his sexual irregularities. Kreizler, too, remarked on this irony, saying that if Santorelli had only been able to talk to his son and explore the roots of his peculiar behavior, he might have been able to change it. But by employing violence he turned the affair into a battle, one in which Giorgio's very psychic survival became associated, in the boy's mind, with the actions his father objected to. Sara and I puzzled with *that* concept all the way through Act II; but by the second intermission we were beginning to get it, to understand that a boy who made his living allowing himself to be used in the worst possible ways was, in his own view, asserting himself by doing so.

The same thing could in all probability have been said of the Zweig children, Kreizler remarked, vindicating my assumption that he would not write off to coincidence the similarity between those two victims and Giorgio Santorelli. Laszlo went on to say that we could not overemphasize the importance of this new information: we now had the beginnings of a pattern, something on which to build a general picture of what qualities inspired violence in our killer. We owed that knowledge to Sara's determination to visit the Santorellis, as well as to her ability to make Mrs. Santorelli trust her. Laszlo expressed his indebtedness somewhat awkwardly, but nonetheless genuinely; and the look of fulfillment on Sara's face was worth all the trials of the day.

Things were fairly chummy, in other words, when Theodore entered our box with Mayor Strong during that same intermission. In an instant the atmosphere in the little enclosure was transformed. For all his use of the rank "colonel" and his reputation as a reformer, William L. Strong was much like any other well-to-do, middle-aged New York businessman—meaning that he had no use for Kreizler. His Honor said nothing in reply to our greetings, just sat in one of the free seats in the box and waited for the lights to go down. It was left to Theodore to awkwardly explain that Strong had something important he wished to

say. Talking during a performance at the Metropolitan was not generally considered a barbarity—indeed, some of the city's most noteworthy personal and business affairs were conducted at such times—but neither Kreizler nor I shared this disrespect for the efforts of those onstage. We did not, in other words, provide a friendly audience when Strong began his lecture during the ominous opening of Act III.

"Doctor," the mayor said without looking at him, "Commissioner Roosevelt assures me that your recent visit to Police Headquarters was entirely social. I trust that is true." Kreizler didn't answer, which irked Strong a bit. "I am surprised, however, to see you attending the opera with an employee of the Police Department." He nodded rather rudely in Sara's direction.

"If you'd like to see my *entire* social calendar, Mayor Strong," Sara said bravely, "I can arrange that."

Theodore clutched his forehead quietly but vigorously, and Strong's anger grew, though he did not acknowledge Sara's remark. "Doctor, you are perhaps unaware that we are engaged in a great crusade to root out corruption and degeneracy in our city." Again, Kreizler would not reply, but kept his eyes on Victor Maurel and Frances Saville as they sang together. "In this battle we have many enemies," Strong continued. "If they can find any way to embarrass or discredit us, they will use it. Am I clear, sir?"

"Clear, sir?" Kreizler finally answered, still not looking at Strong. "Certainly you are ill-mannered, but as to clear…" He shrugged.

Strong stood up. "Then let me be plain. If you were to associate yourself with the Police Department in any capacity, Doctor, it would constitute just such a way for our enemies to discredit us. Decent people have no use for your work, sir, for your abominable opinions of the American family, or for your obscene probing into the minds of American children. Such matters are the province of parents and their spiritual advisors. If I were you, I should limit my work to the lunatic asylums, where it belongs. At any rate, no one associated with this administration has any use for such filth. Kindly remember that." The mayor stood up and made for the exit, pausing to turn briefly on Sara. "And you, young lady, would do well to remember that hiring women to work at headquarters was an *experiment*—and that experiments often fail!"

With that, Strong disappeared. Theodore lingered behind just long

enough to whisper that future public appearances by the three of us might not be wise, and then he took off after the mayor. It was an outrageous but nonetheless typical incident: there were undoubtedly many people in the audience that night who would have said very similar things to Kreizler, given the chance. Laszlo, Cyrus, and I, having heard it all before, didn't take it as hard as Sara, who was a newcomer to this kind of intolerance. For much of the remaining performance, she looked as though she might be preparing to blow Strong's brains out with her derringer; but Maurel and Saville's final duet was so superbly heartrending that even angry Sara put the real world aside. When the lights went up for the last time we all stood and bellowed bravos and bravas, getting a small wave from Maurel in return. As soon as Sara caught a glimpse of Theodore and Strong in their box, however, her indignation was back in force.

"Honestly, Doctor, how can you tolerate it?" she said, as we made our way out. "The man is an idiot!"

"As you will soon discover, Sara," Kreizler said calmly, "one cannot afford to pay the slightest attention to such statements. Although there is one aspect of the mayor's interest in this matter that does concern me."

I didn't even have to think about it—the idea had occurred to me while Strong was talking: "The two priests," I said.

Laszlo nodded to me. "Indeed, Moore. Those two troublesome priests—one wonders who arranged for such 'spiritual advisors' to accompany the detectives today. For the moment, however, that must remain a mystery." He checked his silver watch. "Good. We should arrive exactly on time. I hope our guests will do the same."

"Guests?" Sara said. "But where are we going?"

"To dinner," Kreizler answered simply. "And to what I hope will be a most illuminating conference."

CHAPTER 10

It is often difficult, I find, for people today to grasp the notion that one family, working through several restaurants, could change the eating habits of an entire country. But such was the achievement of the Delmonicos in the United States of the last century. Before they opened their first small café on William Street in 1823, catering to the business and financial communities of Lower Manhattan, American food could generally be described as things boiled or fried whose purpose was to sustain hard work and hold down alcohol—usually bad alcohol. The Delmonicos, though Swiss, had brought the French method to America, and each generation of their family refined and expanded the experience. Their menu, from the first, contained dozens of dishes both delectable and healthy, all offered at what, considering the preparation that went into them, were reasonable prices. Their wine cellar was as expansive and as excellent as any in Paris. So great was their success that within decades they had two downtown restaurants, and one uptown; and by the time of the Civil War, travelers from all over the country who had eaten at Delmonico's and taken news of the experience home with them were demanding that the owners of restaurants everywhere give them not only pleasant surroundings, but food that was nutritious and expertly prepared. The craving for first-rate dining became a kind of national fever in the latter decades of the century—and Delmonico's was responsible.

But fine food and wine were only part of the reason for the Delmonicos' prosperity: the family's professed egalitarianism also drew customers in. On any given night at the uptown restaurant on Twenty-sixth Street and Fifth Avenue, one was just as likely to run into Diamond Jim Brady and Lillian Russell as Mrs. Vanderbilt and the other matrons of New York's high society. Even the likes of Paul Kelly were not turned away. Perhaps more amazing than the fact that

anyone could get in was the fact that everyone was forced to wait an equal amount of time for a table—reservations were not taken (save for parties in the private dining rooms), and no favoritism was ever exhibited. The wait was sometimes annoying; but to find yourself on line behind someone like Mrs. Vanderbilt, who would squawk and stamp about "such treatment!" could be very entertaining.

On the particular night of our conference with the Isaacson brothers, Laszlo had taken the precaution of engaging a private room, knowing that our conversation would be deeply upsetting to anyone around us in the main dining room. We approached the block-long restaurant from the Broadway side, where the café was located, then turned left at Twenty-sixth Street and pulled up to the main entrance. Cyrus and Stevie were dismissed for the evening, having had a lot of late nights recently. The rest of us would get cabs home after dinner. We stepped up to the door and then inside, and were immediately greeted by young Charlie Delmonico.

The family's older generation had almost completely died off by 1896, and Charlie had given up a career on Wall Street to take over the business. He couldn't have been better suited to the task: suave, dapper, and eternally tactful, he attended to every detail without a look of care ever narrowing his enormous eyes or ruffling a hair of his natty beard.

"Dr. Kreizler," he said as we approached, taking our hands and smiling delicately. "And Mr. Moore. Always a pleasure, gentlemen, especially when you are together. And Miss Howard as well—it's been some time since you've been in. I'm grateful that you are able to return." That was Charlie's way of saying he understood Sara had been through a lot since her father died. "Your other guests, Doctor, have already arrived, and are waiting upstairs." He kept talking as we checked our outer garments. "I remembered you saying that you found neither olive nor crimson conducive to digestion, so I have placed you in the blue room—will that be satisfactory?"

"Considerate, as ever, Charles," Kreizler answered. "Thank you."

"You're welcome to go right up," Charlie said. "Ranhofer is, as always, ready."

"Ah-ha!" I said, at the mention of Delmonico's brilliant chef. "I trust he's girding himself for our stern judgment?"

Charlie smiled again, that same gentle curve of the mouth. "I

believe he has something quite remarkable planned. Come, gentlemen."

We followed Charlie through the mirrored walls, mahogany furniture, and frescoed ceiling of the main dining room and then up to the private blue room on the second floor. The Isaacson brothers were already seated at a small but elegant table, looking a bit bewildered. Their confusion mounted when they saw Sara, whom they knew from headquarters; but she very cagily sidestepped their questions, saying that someone had to take notes for Commissioner Roosevelt, who was taking a personal interest in the case.

"He is?" Marcus Isaacson answered, the dark eyes to either side of the pronounced nose going wide with apprehension. "This isn't—well, this isn't some sort of test, is it? I know that everyone in the department is up for review, but—well, a case that's three years old, it doesn't really seem fair to judge us…"

"Not that we don't appreciate that the case is still open," Lucius said hurriedly, mopping a few beads of sweat from his brow with a handkerchief as waiters arrived with platters of oysters and glasses of sherry and bitters.

"Calm yourselves, Detective Sergeants," Kreizler said. "This is no review. You are here precisely because you are known to be unassociated with those elements of the force that have brought on the current controversies." At that, both Isaacsons let out considerable amounts of air and attacked the sherry. "You were not," Kreizler continued, "particular favorites of Inspector Byrnes, I understand?"

The two brothers eyed each other, and Lucius nodded to Marcus, who spoke: "No, sir. Byrnes believed in methods that were—well, outdated, let's say. My brother—that is, Detective Sergeant Isaacson—and I have both studied abroad, which made the inspector extremely suspicious. That, and our—background."

Kreizler nodded; it was no secret how the department's old guard felt about Jews. "Well, then, gentlemen," Laszlo said. "Suppose you tell us what you were able to discover today."

After arguing for a moment about who would report first, the Isaacsons decided it would be Lucius:

"As you know, Doctor, there is a limited amount one can tell from bodies that are in such an advanced state of decomposition. Still, I believe we uncovered a few facts that slipped by the coroner and the

investigating detectives. To begin with, the cause of death—excuse me, Miss Howard, but aren't you going to take notes?"

She smiled at him. "Mentally. I'll transfer them to paper later."

This answer did nothing for Lucius, who eyed Sara nervously before going on: "Yes, uh—the cause of death." The waiters reappeared to remove our oyster trays and substitute some green turtle soup *au clair*. Lucius wiped his broad brow again and took a taste while the waiters opened a bottle of amontillado. "Mmm—delicious!" he decided, the food easing his mind. "But as I was saying—the police and coroner's reports indicated that death was caused by the throat wounds. Severing of the common carotid arteries, et cetera. It's the obvious interpretation, if you've got a body with a cut throat. But I noticed almost immediately that there was extensive damage to the laryngeal structures, especially the hyoid bone, which in both cases was fractured. That, of course, indicates strangulation."

"I don't understand," I said. "Why would the murderer cut their throats if he'd already strangled them?"

"Blood lust," Marcus answered, very matter-of-factly, as he ate his soup.

"Yes, blood lust," Lucius agreed. "He was probably concerned with keeping his clothes clean, so that he wouldn't attract any attention during his escape. But he needed to see the blood—or maybe smell it. Some murderers have said it's the smell rather than the sight that satisfies them."

Fortunately, I'd already finished my soup, as this last comment didn't do wonders for my stomach. I looked over to Sara, who was absorbing it all with great poise. Kreizler was studying Lucius with immense fascination.

"So," Laszlo said, "you hypothesize strangulation. Excellent. What else?"

"There's the business about the eyes," Lucius answered, leaning back so that his soup bowl could be removed by the waiters. "I had some trouble with the reports on that one." We were now presented with *aiguillettes* of bass done in a creamy Mornay sauce—quite tasty. The amontillado was exchanged for Hochheimer.

"Excuse me, Doctor," Marcus said quietly. "But I did want to say—remarkable food. I've never had anything quite like it."

“I’m delighted, Detective Sergeant,” Kreizler answered. “There is much more to come. Now, then—as to the eyes?”

“Right,” Lucius said. “The police report made some mention of birds or rats having gotten at the eyes. And the coroner was apparently willing to stand by that, which is fairly extraordinary. Even if the bodies had been out in the open rather than in an enclosed water tower, why would scavengers feed only on the eyes? What puzzled me most, though, about such a theory was that the knife marks were quite distinct.”

Kreizler, Sara, and I all stopped in mid-chew and looked at each other. “Knife marks?” Kreizler said quietly. “There was no mention of knife marks in any of the reports.”

“Yes, I know!” Lucius said jovially. The conversation, though gruesome, seemed to be relaxing him; the wine didn’t hurt, either. “It really was strange. But there they were—some very narrow grooves on the malar bone and supraorbital ridge, along with some additional cuts on the sphenoid.”

They were virtually the same words Kreizler had used to Theodore and me in describing Giorgio Santorelli’s body.

“At first glance,” Lucius continued, “one might’ve been led to believe that the various cuts were unconnected, indications of separate jabs of a blade. But they seemed to me to bear a relation to each other, so I tried an experiment. There’s a fairly good cutlery store in the neighborhood of your Institute, Doctor, which also sells hunting knives. I went there and bought the kind of blade I thought was probably used, in three different lengths—nine-inch, ten-inch, and eleven.” He fumbled in the inside pocket of his jacket. “The largest proved the best fit.”

At that he dropped a gleaming knife of what seemed gigantic proportions onto the center of the table. Its handle was made of deer antler, the hilt was brass, and the steel of the blade was engraved with a picture of a stag in some brush.

“The Arkansas toothpick,” Marcus said. “It’s unclear whether Jim Bowie or his brother originally designed the thing, back in the early thirties, but we do know that most of them are now manufactured by one of the Sheffield firms, in England, for export to our western states. It can be used for hunting, but it’s basically a fighting knife. For hand-to-hand combat.”

“Could it be used,” I said, again remembering Giorgio Santorelli, “as a—well, as a carving and chopping instrument? I mean, would it be heavy enough, and hold a fine edge?”

“Absolutely,” Marcus answered. “The edge depends on the quality of the steel, and in a knife this size, especially if it’s manufactured in Sheffield, you tend to get high-quality, hard steel.” He caught himself, and looked at me with the same suspicious puzzlement he had shown that afternoon. “Why do you ask?”

“It looks expensive,” Sara said, deliberately changing the subject. “Is it?”

“Sure,” Marcus said. “Durable, though. One of these would last you years.”

Kreizler was staring at the knife: this, his gaze seemed to say, is what *he* uses.

“The marks on the sphenoid,” Lucius resumed, “were created at the same time that the cutting edge dug into the malar bone and the supraorbital ridge. It’s perfectly natural, since he was working in such a small area—the eye socket of a child’s skull—with such a large instrument. Still, for all that, it was probably a skillful job. The damage could have been much greater. Now…” He took a large sip of wine. “If you want to know *what* he was doing, or *why,* there we can only speculate. Possibly he was selling body parts to anatomists and medical colleges. Although he would probably have taken more than just the eyes, in that case. It’s somewhat confusing.”

None of us could say anything to that. We stared at the knife, myself at least afraid to touch it, as the waiters appeared again with plates of saddle of lamb *à la Colbert* and bottles of Château Lagrange.

“Admirable,” Kreizler said. He finally looked up at Lucius, whose fat face was starting to turn red with the wine. “A truly splendid job, Detective Sergeant.”

“Oh, that’s not all of it,” Lucius answered, digging into his lamb.

“Eat slowly,” Marcus whispered. “Remember your stomach.”

Lucius paid no heed. “That’s not all,” he repeated. “There were some very interesting fractures of the frontal and parietal bones, at the top of the skull. But I’ll let my brother—I’ll let Detective Sergeant Isaacson explain those.” Lucius looked up at us with a grin. “I’m

enjoying my food too much to talk anymore."

Marcus watched him, shaking his head. "You're going to be sick tomorrow," he mumbled. "And you're going to blame me—but I warned you."

"Detective Sergeant?" Kreizler said, leaning back with a glass of Lagrange. "You will have to possess some remarkable information indeed, if you hope to outdo your—*colleague,* here."

"Well, it *is* interesting," Marcus answered, "and it may well tell us something substantive. The fracture lines that my brother found were inflicted from above—from *directly* above. Now, in an assault, which this obviously was, you'd expect angles of attack, either from similarity of height or difficulty of approach due to the struggle. The nature of the wounds indicates, however, that not only did the assailant have complete physical control over his victims, but he was also tall enough to strike directly downward very forcefully with a blunt instrument of some kind—possibly even his fists, though we doubt that."

We allowed Marcus a few moments to eat; but when succulent Maryland terrapin arrived to replace the lamb, from which Lucius had to be almost forcefully separated, we urged him to go on:

"Let me see. I'll try to make this as accessible as I can—if we take the respective heights of the two children, and then add the aspects of the skull fractures that I've just described to the equation, we can start to speculate about the height of the attacker." He turned to Lucius. "What did we guess, roughly six-foot-two?" Lucius nodded and Marcus continued. "I don't know how much any of you know about anthropometry—the Bertillon system of identification and classification—"

"Oh, are you trained in it?" Sara said. "I've been anxious to meet someone who is."

Marcus looked surprised. "You know Bertillon's work, Miss Howard?"

As Sara nodded eagerly, Kreizler cut in: "I must confess ignorance, Detective Sergeant. I've heard the name, but little more."

And so, while disposing of the terrapin we also reviewed the achievements of Alphonse Bertillon, a misanthropic, pedantic Frenchman who had revolutionized the science of criminal

identification during the eighties. As a lowly clerk assigned the task of going through the files that the Paris police department kept on known criminals, Bertillon had discovered that if one took fourteen measurements of any human body—not only height, but foot, hand, nose, and ear size, and so on—the odds were over 286 million to one that any two people would share the same results. Despite enormous resistance from his superiors, Bertillon had begun to record the body-part sizes of known criminals and then to categorize his results, training a staff of assistant measurers and photographers in the process; and when he used the information thus collected to solve several infamous cases that had stumped the Paris detectives, he became an international celebrity.

Bertillon's system had been adopted quickly throughout Europe, later in London, and only recently in New York. Throughout his tenure as head of the Division of Detectives, Thomas Byrnes had rejected anthropometry, with its exact measurements and careful photographs, as too intellectually demanding for most of his men—undoubtedly an accurate assumption. Then, too, Byrnes had created the Rogues' Gallery, a room full of photographs of most known criminals in the United States: he was jealous of his creation, and considered it sufficient for the purposes of identification. Finally, Byrnes had established his own principles of detection and would not have them overthrown by any Frenchman. But with Byrnes's departure from the force, anthropometry had picked up more advocates, one of whom was evidently sitting at our table that night.

"The main shortcoming of Bertillon's system," Marcus said, "besides the fact that it depends on skilled measurers, is that it can only match a suspected or convicted criminal to his record and aliases." Having eaten a small bowl of sorbet Elsinore, Marcus started to take a cigarette from his pocket, evidently thinking that the meal was over. He was very pleasantly surprised when a plate of canvasback duck, prepared with hominy and a currant *gelée,* was placed before him, along with a glass of splendid Chambertin.

"Excuse my asking, Doctor," Lucius said in continuing confusion, "but…is there actually a conclusion to this meal, or do we just work our way into breakfast?"

"So long as you are full of useful information, Detective Sergeants, the food will continue coming."

"Well, then…" Marcus took a big bite of duck, closing his eyes in appreciation. "We'd better stay interesting. Now, as I was about to

say, the Bertillon system offers no physical evidence of criminal commission. It can't put a man *at* the scene of the crime. But it can help us shorten the list of known criminals who may be responsible. We're betting that the man who killed the Zweig children was somewhere in the neighborhood of six-foot-two. That'll produce relatively few candidates, even from the files of the New York police. It's an advantageous starting point. And the better news is that, with so many cities now adopting the system, we can make our check nationwide—even to Europe, if we want to."

"And if the man has no prior criminal record?" Kreizler asked.

"Then, as I say," Marcus answered with a shrug, "we're out of luck." Kreizler looked disappointed at this, and Marcus—eyeing, it seemed to me, his plate, and wondering if the food would really stop coming when we reached a dead end—cleared his throat. "That is, Doctor, out of luck so far as official departmental methods go. However, I'm a student of some other techniques that might prove useful in that eventuality."

Lucius looked worried. "Marcus," he mumbled. "I'm still not sure, it's not accepted, yet—"

Marcus answered quietly but quickly: "Not in *court.* But it would still make sense in an investigation. We *discussed* this."

"Gentlemen?" Kreizler said. "Will you share your secret?"

Lucius gulped his Chambertin nervously. "It's still theoretical, Doctor, and is not accepted anywhere in the world as legal evidence, but…" He looked to Marcus, seemingly worried that his brother had cost him dessert. "Oh, all right. Go ahead."

Marcus spoke confidentially. "It's called dactyloscopy."

"Oh," I said. "You mean fingerprinting."

"Yes," Marcus replied, "that's the colloquial term."

"But—" Sara broke in. "I mean no offense, Detective Sergeant, but dactyloscopy has been rejected by every police department in the world. Its scientific basis hasn't even been proven, and no actual case has ever been solved by using it."

"I take no offense at that, Miss Howard," Marcus answered. "And I hope *you* won't take any when I say that you're mistaken. The

scientific basis has been proven, and several cases have been solved using the technique—though not in a part of the world that you're likely to have heard much about."

"Moore," Kreizler interrupted, his voice snapping a bit, "I'm beginning to understand how you must often feel—once again, gentlemen and lady, I'm lost."

Sara started to explain the subject to Laszlo, but after that last little quip of his I had to jump in and take over. Dactyloscopy, or fingerprinting (I explained in what I hoped was a very condescending voice), had been argued for decades as a method of identifying all human beings, criminals included. The scientific premise was that fingerprints do not change throughout a person's lifetime—but there were a great many anthropologists and physicians who didn't yet accept that fact, despite overwhelming supporting evidence and occasional practical demonstrations. In Argentina, for example—a place that, as Marcus Isaacson said, not many people in America or Europe thought much about (or of)—fingerprinting had gotten its first practical test when a provincial police officer in Buenos Aires named Vucetich used the method to solve a murder case that involved the brutal bludgeoning of two small children.

"And so," Kreizler said, as our waiters appeared yet again, bearing *petits aspics de foie gras,* "I take it there is a general shift away from Bertillon's system."

"Not yet," Marcus answered. "It's an ongoing fight. Even though the reliability of prints has been demonstrated, there's a great deal of resistance."

"The important thing to remember," Sara added—and how very satisfying, to see *her* now lecturing Kreizler!—"is that fingerprints can show who has been in a given place. It's ideal for our—" She caught herself, and calmed. "It has great potential."

"And how are the prints taken?" Kreizler asked.

"There are three basic methods," Marcus answered. "First, obviously, are visible prints—a hand that's been dipped in paint, blood, ink, anything like that, and has then touched something else. Then there are plastic prints, left when someone touches putty, clay, wet plaster, and so on. Last, and the most difficult, are latent prints. If you pick up that glass in front of you, Doctor, your fingers will leave a residue of perspiration and body oil in the pattern of your fingerprint.

If I suspect that you might have done so"—Marcus removed two small vials from his pockets, one containing a gray-white powder and one a black substance of similar consistency—"I will dust with either aluminum powder"—he held up the gray-white vial—"or with finely ground carbon"—he held up the black. "The choice depends on the color of the background object. White shows up against dark objects, black against light; either would be suitable for your glass. The powders are absorbed by the oils and perspiration, leaving a perfect image of your print."

"Remarkable," Kreizler said. "But if it is now scientifically accepted that a human being's fingerprints never vary, *how* can this not be admitted as legal evidence in court?"

"Change isn't something most people enjoy, even if it's progressive change." Marcus put the vials down on the table and smiled. "But I'm sure you're aware of that, Dr. Kreizler."

Kreizler nodded once in acknowledgment of this comment, then pushed his plate away and sat back again. "Grateful as I am for all of your instructive words," he said, "I get the feeling, Detective Sergeant, that they have some more specific purpose."

Marcus turned to Lucius yet again, but his brother only shrugged in resignation. With that, Marcus pulled something flat from the inner pocket of his jacket.

"Chances are," he said, "no coroner would notice or care if they happened on something like this today, much less three years ago." He dropped the sheet—actually a photograph—on the table in front of us, and our three heads went close together to view it. It was a detail of something, several white objects—bones, I soon determined, but I couldn't be more specific.

"Fingers?" Sara wondered aloud.

"Fingers," Kreizler answered.

"Specifically," Marcus said, "the fingers of Sofia Zweig's left hand. Note the nail on the tip of the thumb, the one you can see fully." He took a magnifying lens from his pocket and handed it to us, then sat back to nibble *foie gras.*

"It seems," Kreizler mused as Sara picked up the lens, "bruised. At least, there is discoloration of some kind."

Marcus looked at Sara. “Miss Howard?”

She put the lens before her face, and brought the photograph closer. Her eyes struggled to focus, and then went wide in discovery. “I see…”

“See what?” I said, squirming like a four-year-old.

As Laszlo looked over Sara’s shoulder, his expression became even more astounded and impressed than hers. “Good lord, you don’t mean —”

“What, what, what?” I said, and Sara finally handed me the glass and the picture. I followed instructions and examined the nail at the tip of the thumb. Without the glass it looked, as Kreizler had said, discolored: Magnified, it clearly bore the mark of what I knew to be a fingerprint, left in some kind of dark substance. I was dumb with surprise.

“It’s a very lucky chance,” Marcus said. “Though partial, it’s sufficient for identification. Somehow, it managed to survive both the coroner and the mortician. The substance is blood, by the way. Probably the girl’s own, or her brother’s. The print, however, is too large to be either of theirs. The coffin has preserved the stain extremely well—and now we have a permanent record of it.”

Kreizler looked up, as close to beaming as he was likely to get. “My dear Detective Sergeant, this is almost as impressive as it is unexpected!”

Marcus looked away, smiling self-consciously, as Lucius piped up in the same worried tone. “Please remember, Doctor, that it has no legal or forensic significance. It’s a clue, and could be used for investigative purposes, nothing else.”

“And nothing else, Detective Sergeant, is needed. Except, possibly”—Laszlo clapped his hands twice and the waiters reappeared —“dessert. Which you gentlemen have thoroughly earned.” The waiters took away our last dinner dishes and returned with Alliance pears: steeped in wine, deep-fried, powdered with sugar, and smothered in apricot sauce. I thought Lucius would have an attack when he saw them. Kreizler kept his eyes on the two brothers. “This is truly commendable work. But I’m afraid, gentlemen, that you have undertaken it under slightly…false premises. For which I apologize.”

We then explained our activities fully to the Isaacsons, as we

consumed the pears and some delicious *petits fours* that followed. Nothing was left out of our account: the condition of Giorgio Santorelli's body, the troubles with Flynn and Connor, our meeting with Roosevelt, and Sara's conversation with Mrs. Santorelli were all discussed in detail. Nor did any of us try to sugarcoat the issue—the person we were hunting, Kreizler said, might be unconsciously urging us to find him, but his conscious thoughts were fixed on violence, and if we got too close that violence might easily spill over onto us. The warning did give Marcus and Lucius some little pause, as did the thought that our business would be undertaken in secret and disavowed by all city officials if discovered. But both men's overarching reaction to the prospect was excitement. Any good detective would have felt the same, for it was the chance of a lifetime: to try new techniques, to operate outside the stifling pressures of departmental bureaucracy, and to make one's name if the affair were concluded successfully.

And, I must confess, after the meal we'd just eaten and the wine that had accompanied it, such a conclusion seemed somewhat inevitable. Whatever reservations Kreizler, Sara, and I had had about the Isaacsons' peculiar personal behavior, their work far outweighed such considerations: in the space of a day, we'd been given a general idea of our murderer's physical stature and weapon of choice, as well as a permanent image of one physical attribute that might ultimately prove his undoing. Add to all this the fruit of Sara's initiative—an initial impression of what the killer's victims had in common—and success seemed, to a man in my drunken state, well within our grasp.

Yet it also seemed to me that my own part in this stage of the work had been too minor. I had made no inauguratory contribution, except to escort Sara earlier that day; and as we fairly well carried Lucius Isaacson to a cab, the clock in Del's having long since tolled two, I combed my rather fuzzy mind for a way to right that situation. What I came up with was equally fuzzy: after getting Sara and Kreizler a hansom and saying good night to them (he would drop her off at Gramercy Park), I turned south and made for Paresis Hall.

CHAPTER 11

Knowing that I would need to be on my toes once I reached the hall, I decided to walk the mile or so to Cooper Square and let the cold air sober me up a bit. Broadway was nearly deserted, except for the occasional group of young men in white uniforms who were shoveling snow into large wagons. This was the private army of Colonel Waring, the street-cleaning genius who had tidied up Providence, Rhode Island, and then been imported to work the same magic in New York. Waring's boys were unquestionably efficient—the amount of snow, horse manure, and general garbage on the streets had declined sharply since their advent—but their uniforms apparently made them think that they had some sort of enforcement status. Every so often a kid of about fourteen, dressed in one of Waring's white tunics and helmets, would catch a less than stellar citizen throwing refuse carelessly onto the street and try to make an arrest. It was impossible to convince these zealots that they had no such authority, and the incidents continued. Sometimes they ended in violence, a record of which the boys were proud—and one which made me cautious as I passed them that night. My gait must have given away my condition, however, for as I walked by several teams of broom- and shovel-wielding vigilantes, they took my measure suspiciously, making it clear that if I wanted to soil the streets, I'd better do it in some other town.

By the time I reached Cooper Square I was feeling fairly alert and mighty cold. As I passed the big, brown mass of Cooper Union I began to think of the large glass of brandy I intended to order at Paresis Hall; I was thus caught thoroughly off guard when a workmen's truck, bearing the legend GENOVESE & SONS—IRON WORKS—BKLYN., N.Y., came careening around the north end of Cooper Square Park behind a huffing gray horse that looked like he'd rather be anywhere than out on such a night. The truck ground to a halt, and four toughs in miner's

caps got out of the back, rushing into the park. They soon reappeared, dragging two expensively dressed men.

"Filthy fags!" one of the toughs shouted, catching the first man a nice blow across the face with what appeared to be a piece of pipe. Blood came instantly from the man's nose and mouth, spattering across his clothes and onto the snow. "Get off the streets, if you want to bugger each other!"

Two of the other ambassadors from Brooklyn held the second man, who appeared older than the first, while a third put his face close. "Like to fuck boys, do you?"

"I'm sorry, but you're really not my sort," the man answered, with a composure that made me think this had happened to him before. "I like young men who bathe." That one cost him three solid blows to the stomach, after which he doubled over and retched onto the frozen ground.

It was one of those moments for fast thinking: I could jump in and get *my* head cracked, or I could—

"Hey!" I shouted at the toughs, and they turned their cold-blooded stares on me. "You boys'd better watch it—there's half a dozen cops on their way, saying no guineas from Brooklyn better start anything in the Fifteenth Precinct!"

"Oh, there are, eh?" said the tough who seemed to be the leader, as he moved back to the truck. "And which way're they coming from?"

"Right down Broadway!" I said, jerking a thumb behind me.

"Come on, boys!" said the tough. "Let's settle some mick hash!" That brought shouts and cheers from the other three as they piled into the truck and headed up Broadway, asking if I wanted to come along but not waiting for an answer.

I moved over to the two injured men, but could only say, "Do you need—" before they ran off in full flight, the older man clutching his ribs and moving with difficulty. I realized that when the toughs failed to find the cops, they'd probably return for me, and I therefore moved quickly across the Bowery under the tracks of the Third Avenue Elevated to Biff Ellison's place.

Paresis Hall's electric sign was still burning bright at close to three in the morning. The joint had taken its name from a patent medicine

that advertised in dive toilets, promising protection and relief from the more serious social diseases. The windows of the Hall were shaded, and honest citizens of the neighborhood were grateful for that fact. Inside the busy doorway—around which stood a wide range of effeminate men and boys, all of them attempting to drum up business with entering and departing customers—was a long, brass-railed bar, along with a large number of round wooden tables and simple chairs of the sort that were easily broken in fights and easily replaced afterwards. A rough stage had been built at the far end of the long, high-ceilinged room, on which more boys and men in various stages of female dress cavorted to lively yet discordant music provided by a piano, clarinet, and violin.

The essential purpose of Paresis Hall was to arrange affairs between customers and the various types of prostitutes who worked there. This second group included everything from youths like Giorgio Santorelli to homosexuals who did not favor women's clothes to the occasional bona fide female, who hung about in the hope that some one of the souls who wandered in would rediscover his heterosexuality to her profit. Most of the assignations worked out in the Hall took place at cheap hotels in the neighborhood, though the second floor had a dozen or so rooms out of which young boys who particularly pleased Ellison were allowed to conduct their business.

But what was more distinctive about the Hall, along with only a few other such places in town, was a near total lack of the secretiveness that usually marked homosexual dealings in the city. Released from the need to be in any way careful, Ellison's patrons cavorted raucously and spent freely, and the Hall did enormous business. In the end, however, neither the scale nor the unusualness of its operations could keep it from being at heart like any other dive: sordid, smoky, and thoroughly disheartening.

I hadn't been inside the door thirty seconds before there was a small but strong arm around my torso and a cold piece of metal at my throat. The sudden aroma of lilac alerted me to Ellison's presence in the general area behind me; and I assumed that the metal I felt was the signature weapon of one of Biff's cronies, Razor Riley. Riley was a skinny, dangerous little miscreant from Hell's Kitchen who, though a Gopher, occasionally ran with and worked for Ellison, whose sexual preferences he shared.

"I thought Kelly and me made ourselves pretty clear the other day, Moore," Ellison boomed. I still couldn't see him. "You ain't tying me to the Santorelli business. You gutsy or just crazy coming in here like

this?"

"Neither, Biff," I said, as clearly as extreme fear would allow: Riley was notoriously fond of cutting people up. "I just wanted you to know that I did you a good turn."

Ellison laughed. "*You,* scribbler? What could you do for me?" At that he came around to face me, his ridiculous checked suit and gray bowler all reeking of cologne. He held a long, thin cigar in one beefy hand.

"I told the commissioner you didn't have anything to do with it," I gasped.

He came close, his thick lips parting to release the stench of bad whiskey. "Yeah?" he said, his little eyes gleaming. "And did you convince him?"

"Sure," I said.

"Oh? How?"

"Simple. I told him it wasn't your style."

Ellison had to pause as the mass of cells that, in his case, passed for a brain mulled this over. Then he smiled. "Say—you're right, Moore. It *ain't* my style! Well, whattaya know—let 'im go, Razor."

At that the several employees and customers who had gathered to see if there would be bloodshed dispersed in disappointment. I turned to the wiry figure of Razor Riley and watched as he folded his favorite weapon, pocketed it, and then smoothed his waxed mustache. He put his hands on his hips, ready to fight—but I just straightened my white tie and neatened my cuffs.

"Try milk, Riley," I said. "I hear it helps the bones grow."

Riley went for his pocket again, but Ellison laughed and restrained him with an effusive hug. "Aw, that's all right, Razor, let the guy crack wise, it ain't gonna hurt you." Then he turned to me and put an arm around my neck. "Come on, Moore, I'll buy you a drink. And you can tell me how come it is you turned into my pal all of a sudden."

We stood at the bar, and I could see all the sad business of the Hall reflected in a large mirror that ran along the wall behind the endless bottles of bad liquor. Remembering exactly who and what I was

dealing with, I abandoned the cherished idea of a brandy (besides being of shockingly poor quality, it was likely to be laced with any combination of camphor, benzine, cocaine shavings, and chloral hydrate) and ordered a beer. The swill I was given may even have *been* beer, too, at some point in its existence. As I took a sip, one of the chanteuses on the stage at the other end of the Hall began to whine:

There's a name that's never spoken,
And a mother's heart half broken,
There is just another missing from the old home, that's all…

Ellison took a glass of whiskey, then turned when a boy-whore patted his rump. Biff tweaked the youth's cheek roughly.

"Well, Moore?" he said, staring into the boy's painted eyes. "Why the good turn? Don't tell me you'd like to sample the wares down here."

"No, not tonight, Biff," I said. "What I thought was that maybe since I helped you out with the cops, you might be willing to share some information—you know, give me a hand with the story, that kind of thing."

He eyed me up and down as the boy-whore disappeared into the noisy throng. "Since when does the God-almighty *New York Times* run stories like that? And where the hell you been tonight, anyway, a funeral?"

"The opera," I answered. "And the *Times* isn't the only paper in town."

"Yeah?" He didn't sound convinced. "Well, I don't know nothing about it, Moore. Gloria, she used to be okay. Really. Hell, I let her use one of the rooms upstairs, even. But she got—troublesome. Starts asking for a bigger cut, starts telling the other girls they ought to ask for one, too. So, a couple a nights ago, I says—Gloria, keep it up and you're out on your pretty little ass. Then she plays like she'll make nice, but I don't trust her no more. I was gonna get rid of her—not in any permanent meaning of the word, right?—but just kick her out, let her work the streets a couple a weeks and see how she liked it. And then—this." He gulped whiskey and blew cigar smoke. "The little

guttersnipe had it coming, Moore."

I waited a moment for him to go on; but his attention was distracted by two young men in stockings and garters who were shouting threats at each other out on the dance floor. Knives soon appeared. Ellison chuckled at the sight, and then offered his assessment:

"You two bitches cut each other up you won't be no good to nobody!"

"Biff?" I said eventually. "So that's all you can tell me?"

"That's all," he answered with a nod. "Now, how about you get outta here before there's trouble?"

"Why? You hiding something? Upstairs, maybe?"

"No, I ain't hiding anything," he answered, annoyed. "I just don't like reporters in my place. And my customers don't like it, neither. Some of 'em are respectable boys, you know—got families and positions to consider."

"Then maybe you'll let me take a look at the room Gior—*Gloria* used. Just to convince me you're square."

Ellison sighed, leaning back on the bar. "Don't push it, Moore."

"Five minutes," I answered.

He considered it and nodded. "Five minutes. But don't talk to nobody. Third door on your left, when you get up the stairs." I started to move away. "Hey." As I turned back, he handed me my beer. "Don't abuse my hospitality, pal."

I nodded and took the beer, then pushed through the crowd to a staircase at the back of the Hall. Several boys and men approached me, seeing the evening suit and smelling money. They propositioned me with every conceivable line, some running their hands along my chest and thighs. But I put a good grip on my billfold and stayed on course to the staircase, trying to keep the physically repellant suggestions with which I was peppered from registering in my mind. As I passed the stage, the droning singer—a fat, middle-aged man wearing heavy facial powder, lip rouge, and a top hat—repeated the refrain:

Yes, there is still a mem'ry living,
There's a father unforgiving,
And a picture that is turn-ed to the wall!

The inside of the staircase was unlit, but the glow of the Hall crept in enough to let me see where I was going. The old, colorless paint on the walls was peeling badly, and as I mounted the first step I heard a grunting sound coming from behind me. Looking into a dark recess on the other side of the doorway, I saw the faint outlines of a youth, his face shoved up against the wall, and another, an older man, who was pressing against the youth's naked backside. With a shudder that made me trip I turned away and hurried up the stairs, pausing once I was in the bare second-floor hall to take a big belt of beer.

Calming a bit, but beginning to wonder about the wisdom of my initiative, I found the third door on the left: a thin, simple wooden job, just like all the others in the hallway. I grabbed the knob, but then thought to knock. I was surprised when a boy's voice said:

"Who is it?"

I opened the door slowly. There was nothing in the room but an old bed and a night table next to it. The paint on the walls was a red that had turned brown, and it was peeling in the corners. There was a small window that looked out on the blank brick wall of the building next door, across about ten feet of alley space.

On the bed sat a flaxen-haired kid, maybe fifteen, his face painted much as Giorgio Santorelli's had been. He wore a sheer linen shirt with lace cuffs and collar, and some theatrical tights. The makeup around his eyes was smudged—he'd been crying.

"I'm not working right now," he said, straining to reach a falsetto pitch. "Maybe you could come back in an hour or so."

"That's all right," I said, "I'm not—"

"I said I'm not working!" the young man shouted, losing the falsetto altogether. "Oh, God, get out, can't you see I'm upset?"

He broke down in tears, clutching at his face, and I stood by the door, suddenly noticing that it felt very warm in the room. I watched the boy for a few minutes, and then something occurred to me:

“You knew Gloria,” I said.

The boy sniffed and wiped carefully at his eyes. “Yes. I knew her. Oh, my face—please go away.”

“No, you don’t understand. I’m trying to find out who killed him—her.”

The boy looked up at me plaintively. “Are you a cop?”

“No, a reporter.”

“A reporter?” He looked back at the floor, wiped his eyes again, and chuckled humorlessly. “Well, I’ve got a hell of a story for you.” He stared out of the window forlornly. “Whoever it was that they found down on that bridge—it couldn’t have been Gloria.”

“Wasn’t Gloria?” The rising temperature in the room was making me thirsty, and I took another big swig of beer. “What makes you think so?”

“Because Gloria never left this room.”

“Never—” It occurred to me that I’d been up too long and had too much to drink: I was having trouble following the kid. “What do you mean?”

“I’ll tell you what I mean. That night, I was in the hallway, outside my room, with a customer. I saw Gloria come in here, alone. I was out there for a good hour, and her door never opened. I figured she was asleep. My customer left after buying me a couple of drinks—the guy didn’t want to pay the price for Sally. That’s me. Sally’s expensive, and he didn’t have what it takes. So I stood there another half an hour, waiting for somebody else to wander up. I didn’t feel like working the floor. And then one of the girls comes screaming in, saying that a cop just told her they found Gloria dead downtown. I ran right in here, and sure enough, she was gone. But she never left.”

“Well…” I tried hard to figure it. “The window, then.” As I crossed to it, I stumbled a bit; I really did need some sleep. The window groaned as I opened it, and when I put my head out, the air wasn’t as cold as it should have been.

“The window?” I heard Sally say. “How? Did she fly? It’s a straight drop down, and Gloria didn’t have a ladder, or rope, or anything. Besides, I asked one of the girls working the front of the alley if she

saw Gloria come out that way. She said no."

The drop from the window to the alley was indeed a precipitous one; it seemed an unlikely escape route. As for the roof, it was another two stories up, along a brick wall that offered no apparent purchases, and was without a fire escape of any kind. I came back inside and closed the window. "Then—" I said. "Then…"

Suddenly I collapsed onto the bed. Sally let out one little shriek at that, and then another when she looked toward the door. Following her glance with difficulty, I saw Ellison, Razor Riley, and a couple of their favorites in the doorway. Riley had his trademark out, and was wiping it back and forth across the palm of one hand. Despite the condition of my mind, I knew instantly that they'd slipped chloral into my beer. A lot of chloral.

"I told you not to talk to anybody, Moore," Ellison said. And then to the youths: "Well, girls—he's a pretty one to look at, ain't he? Who wants to have some fun with the reporter?"

Two of the young painted men leapt onto the bed and began to tug at my clothes. I was able to get halfway up and onto my elbows before Riley raced over and laid a shot on my jaw. Going back down, I recall hearing the singer downstairs launch into "You Made Me What I Am Today—I Hope You're Satisfied"; then the two youths were fighting over my billfold and tearing at my pants as Riley began to bind my hands.

Unconsciousness was coming fast—but just before it arrived, I thought I caught a glimpse of Stevie Taggert jumping into the room like a wild wolf cub, brandishing a long piece of wood studded with rusty nails…

CHAPTER 12

The drug-induced dream that followed was peopled by bizarre creatures, half-human and half-animal, that flew, climbed, and slithered down the sides of a high stone wall while I watched in despair, unable to get to the ground. At one point, the primeval landscape around the wall was shaken by an earthquake that seemed to speak with Kreizler's voice, after which the creatures in my dream became more numerous and my need to get to the ground more desperate. Consciousness, when it finally came, brought little relief, for I had no idea where I was. My head felt remarkably clear, from which I took it that I'd been asleep for many hours; but the airy, expansive room around me was completely strange. Spottily furnished with a combination of clerical desks and elegant Italian appointments, it seemed a nonsensical chamber, well suited to another dream. Arched windows in the style of the Gothic Revival ringed the space, and gave it the feel of a monastery; but the spacious dimensions were more like those of a Broadway sweatshop. Anxious to inspect the place more closely, I tried to get up, but fell back in a slight swoon; and since there seemed to be no one about to call to for assistance, I was forced to content myself with studying my strange surroundings while flat on my back.

I was lying on some sort of a divan, which I would have dated as early nineteenth century. Its green and silver covering matched several chairs, as well as a sofa and love seat, that were nearby. On one long, inlaid mahogany dining table stood a silver candelabra, next to which was a Remington typewriter. This incongruity was echoed in the room's wall hangings: Across from my divan, an ostentatiously framed oil view of Florence hung next to an enormous map of Manhattan that was encrusted with several pins. The pins bore small red flags. On the opposite wall was a large chalkboard, notably blank,

and beneath this black patch sat the most substantial of the five clerical desks, which together formed a ring at the outer perimeter of the room. Large fans hung from the ceiling, and two enormous Persian carpets, with elaborate designs against a deep green background, covered the center of the floor.

It wasn't any sane person's living quarters, and it certainly wasn't an office. Hallucination, I began to think—but then I looked out the window directly in front of me and saw two familiar sights: the top of McCreery's department store, with its elegant mansard roof and cast-iron arched windows, and, to the left, a similar top section of the St. Denis Hotel. The two institutions, I knew, occupied opposite corners of Eleventh Street, on the west side of Broadway.

"Then I must be—across the street," I mumbled, just as sounds began to reach my ears from outside: the rhythmic clicking of horses' hooves, and the drag of metal trolley car wheels against track. Then, suddenly, a loud bell tolled. I spun to my left as fast as my condition would allow, and out another arched window I saw what I knew to be the spire of Grace Church, on Tenth Street. It seemed close enough to touch.

Finally, I heard human voices, and used all my strength to sit up on the divan. I had questions at the ready, but was struck silent by the image of half a dozen workmen, none of whom I recognized, rolling first a very ornate carved billiard table and then a baby grand piano into the room atop small, wheeled sleds. As they huffed and cursed at each other, one of them noticed that I was sitting up.

"Hey!" he said with a grin. "Will ya lookit that—Mr. Moore's awake! How are ya, Mr. Moore?" The other men all smiled and tipped their caps, not seeming to expect an answer.

Talking was more difficult than I'd anticipated, and I could only manage "Where am I? Who are you?"

"Fools is what we are," the same man said. "Been riding on top of the lift with that damned billiard table—only way to get it up here. A damned crazy stunt, but the doc's paying, and he says it goes up."

"Kreizler?" I said.

"The same," the man answered.

I became distracted by a slight discomfort in my stomach. "I'm hungry," I said.

“And so you should be,” said a female voice in reply, from somewhere in the back recesses of the enormous room. “Two nights and a day without food will have that effect, John.” From out of the shadows came Sara, dressed in a simple navy dress that did not encumber her movements. She carried a tray, on which sat a steaming bowl. “Try some broth and bread, it’ll give you strength.”

“Sara!” I said with difficulty, as she sat on the divan and placed the tray on my lap. “Where am I?”

But her attention was distracted when the workmen, having seen her sit next to me, began to whisper among themselves and then laughed conspiratorially. Sara spoke quietly without looking at them:

“Mr. Jonas and his men, being unaware of our undertaking and knowing that I’m not a servant, seem to think my status here is something on the order of group mistress.” She began pouring the salty, delicious chicken broth into me. “The amazing thing is that they all have wives…”

I interrupted my happy slurping long enough to say, “But Sara—where *are* we?”

“We’re at home, John. At least, it’ll have to pass for home for as long as this investigation takes.”

“Next to Grace Church and across the street from McCreery’s—that’s home?”

“Our headquarters,” she answered, and I could see that she very much enjoyed the word. Then her aspect grew concerned. “Speaking of which, I’ve got to get back to Mulberry Street and report to Theodore. The telephone line has been installed, he’s been anxious about that.” She turned toward the back of the room. “Cyrus! Can you come out and help Mr. Moore?”

Cyrus soon joined us, the sleeves of his blue and white striped shirt rolled up and a pair of suspenders strapped over his broad chest. He looked at me with more concern than sympathy, clearly not wanting to assume the task of spoon-feeding.

“That’s all right,” I said, taking the utensil from Sara. “I’m feeling much better, I can manage. But, Sara, you haven’t told me—”

“Cyrus knows everything,” she answered, grabbing a simple coat from an elaborately detailed oak stand that stood by the door. “And

I'm late. Finish the broth, John. Mr. Jonas!" She disappeared out the door. "I'll need the elevator!"

Seeing that I was, in fact, able to feed myself, Cyrus seemed to relax considerably, and pulled up one of the delicate, straight-backed chairs with the silver and green upholstery. "You're looking much better, sir," he said.

"I'm alive," I answered. "And even more remarkably, I'm in New York. I was sure I'd wake up in South America, or on a privateering ship. Tell me, Cyrus—my last memory is of Stevie. Did he…?"

"Yes, sir," Cyrus answered evenly. "Confidentially, he's had his share of trouble sleeping since he saw the body on the bridge. He was out roaming the neighborhood that night, when he saw you walking down Broadway. He said you looked—kind of unsteady on your feet, sir, so he followed you. Just to be sure you'd be all right. When he saw you go into Paresis Hall, he figured he'd wait outside. Understandably. But then a policeman caught sight of him, and accused him of the usual activity for that spot. Stevie denied it, and told the cop he was waiting for you. The officer didn't believe him, and so Stevie bolted into the Hall. He wasn't trying to rescue you, he was just trying to escape—but the way things worked out, the one was the other. The cop didn't arrest anybody, of course, but he made sure you got out with your skin."

"I see. And how did I get to—say, where in the hell *are* we, Cyrus?"

"Number 808 Broadway, Mr. Moore. Top floor, which would be the sixth. The doctor engaged it as a base of operations for the investigation. Not so close to Mulberry Street as'll be noticed, but a carriage can have you there in just a few minutes. Or, if traffic's heavy, the trolley will do the same."

"And what about all these—furnishings, or whatever they are?"

"The doctor and Miss Howard went looking for furniture yesterday, over in Brooklyn. At an office supplier's. But the doctor said he couldn't live with that sort of stuff for a day, much less an extended period of time. So they bought just the desks, and then went to an auction on Fifth Avenue. The furniture of the Marchese Luigi Carcano of Italy was being sold off. They bought quite a bit of it."

"They certainly did," I said, as two of the workmen reappeared bearing a large clock, two Chinese vases, and some green draperies.

“As soon as we had most of it, the doctor figured he’d move you from his house to here.”

“That would be the earthquake,” I said.

“Sir?”

“A dream I had. Why here?”

“Said we couldn’t waste any more time nursing you. He gave you a little more chloral, so you’d come out of it easy. Wanted you ready for work when you woke up.”

Then there were more noises outside the door. I heard Kreizler say, “Ah, is he? Good!” and then he burst in, trailed by Stevie Taggert and Lucius Isaacson. “Moore!” he called. “You’re awake at last, eh?” He strode over and grabbed my wrist, checking the pulse. “How do you feel?”

“Not as bad as I expected to.” Stevie had taken a seat on one of the windowsills and was playing with a fairly sizable jackknife. “I understand I’ve got you to thank for that, Stevie,” I called. He just smiled and looked out the window, his hair falling in front of his face. “That’s a debt I won’t forget.” The boy laughed a bit; he never seemed to know what to make of being appreciated.

“It’s a miracle that he happened to follow you, Moore,” Kreizler said, pulling at my eyelids and examining the orbs underneath. “By all rights you should be dead.”

“Thank you, Kreizler,” I said. “In that case I don’t suppose you’d like to know what I discovered.”

“And what might that be?” he answered, probing my mouth with some kind of instrument. “That the Santorelli boy was never seen leaving Paresis Hall? That he was believed still in his chamber, from which there is no secondary exit?”

The thought that I’d endured my ordeal for nothing was truly depressing. “How do you know that?”

“We thought it was delirious rambling at first,” Lucius Isaacson said, going to one of the desks and emptying the contents of a paper sack onto it. “But you kept repeating it, so Marcus and I went down to check the story out with your friend Sally. Very interesting—Marcus is out working on some possible explanations right now.”

Cyrus crossed the room to hand Lucius an envelope. “Commissioner Roosevelt sent this by runner, Detective Sergeant.”

Lucius quickly opened and perused the message. “Well, it’s official,” he said uncertainly. “My brother and I have been ‘temporarily detached from the Division of Detectives, for personal reasons.’ I only hope my mother doesn’t hear about it.”

“Excellent,” Kreizler said to him. “You’ll have access to the resources of headquarters without being required to appear there regularly—an admirable solution. Perhaps now you can spend a little time teaching John here some slightly more sophisticated methods of detection.” Laszlo laughed once, then lowered his voice as he checked my heart. “I don’t mean to belittle your effort, Moore. It was an important bit of work. But do try to remember that this affair is no joke, especially to many of the people we shall be interviewing. Traveling in pairs on such occasions will be more prudent.”

“You’re preaching to the converted,” I answered.

Kreizler poked and prodded me a bit more, then stood away. “How’s your jaw?”

I hadn’t thought of it, but when I put my hand to my mouth there was some tenderness. “That dwarf,” I said. “He hasn’t got much without the razor.”

“Good man!” Kreizler laughed, slapping my back lightly. “Now finish your broth and get dressed. We’ve got an assessment to do at Bellevue, and I want Jonas’s men to finish this place. Our first staff meeting will be at five o’clock.”

“Assessment?” I said, getting to my feet and expecting to swoon again. But the broth really had restored me. “Who?” I asked, noticing that I was wearing a nightshirt.

“Harris Markowitz, of 75 Forsyth Street,” Lucius answered, walking (I’m reluctant to say waddling, though it had that aspect) over to me with a few sheets of typewritten paper. “A haberdasher. A couple of days ago his wife came in to the Tenth Precinct claiming her husband had poisoned their two grandchildren—Samuel and Sophie Rieter, ages twelve and sixteen—by putting what she called ‘a powder’ in their milk.”

“Poison?” I said. “But our man’s not a poisoner.”

"Not that we know of," Kreizler answered. "But his activities may be more varied than we think—although I don't actually believe this man Markowitz is any more connected to our case than Henry Wolff was."

"The children do, however, fit the apparent pattern among the victims," Lucius said, tactfully but pointedly. And then to me: "The Rieter children were recent immigrants—their father and mother sent them over from Bohemia to stay with Mrs. Rieter's parents and try to find domestic work."

"Immigrants, true," Kreizler answered. "And if this were three years ago I might be impressed. But our quarry's recent taste for prostitutes seems too significant, as do the current mutilations, to allow us to concentrate solely on the immigrant connection. However, even if this Markowitz isn't involved with our business, there are other reasons to investigate such cases. By eliminating them, we can gain a clearer picture of what the person we seek is *not*—a negative image, if you will, that we can eventually print into a positive."

Cyrus had brought me some clothes, and I began to put them on. "But aren't we going to raise suspicions by doing so many assessments of child-murderers?"

"We must rely on the Police Department's lack of imagination," Laszlo answered. "It's not unusual for me to be seen doing such work. The explanation for your presence, Moore, will of course be reporting. By the time anyone at headquarters thinks to connect it all to the current string of murders, our work will, I hope, be done." He turned to Lucius. "Now, then, Detective Sergeant, you might just review the details of the case for our adventurous friend, here."

"Well, Markowitz was clever enough," Lucius answered, almost as if he admired the man. "He used a large amount of opium, all residual bodily traces of which, as you may know, vanish within hours of death. He put it in two glasses of milk, which were fed to the grandchildren at bedtime. When they'd slipped into a comatose state, Markowitz turned on the gas jet in their room. The police arrived the next morning, the place stank of gas, and the detective in charge drew the obvious conclusion. His hypothesis seemed confirmed when the coroner—actually a fairly capable man, in this case—had the contents of the stomachs checked and nothing out of the ordinary turned up. But when the wife kept insisting that the poisoning had in fact taken place, an idea occurred to me. I went down to the flat and located the bedclothes that the children had slept on. It was likely that at least one of the victims had vomited sometime during unconsciousness or

the death throes. If the sheets and blankets hadn't been washed yet, there would be stains. Sure enough, I found them. We ran the standard Stas and reagent tests, and that was where we found the opium traces. In the vomit. Faced with that, Markowitz confessed."

"And he doesn't drink?" Kreizler asked. "No drug addictions?"

"Apparently not," Lucius answered with a shrug.

"Nor did he stand to gain materially from the children's deaths?"

"In no way."

"Good! Then we have several elements we need: extensive premeditation, a lack of intoxication, and no obvious motive. All would characterize our killer. But if we discover that Markowitz is not in fact our man—as I suspect we will—then our task becomes to determine *why* he isn't." Laszlo picked up a piece of chalk and began to rap on the large blackboard, as if trying to coax information out of it. "What makes him different from Santorelli's murderer? Why *didn't* he mutilate the bodies? When we know that, we can focus our imaginary picture just a bit more. Then, as we build our killer's list of attributes, more and more candidates can be eliminated at first glance. For the moment, however, we have a wide field." He pulled on his gloves. "Stevie! You'll be driving. I want Cyrus to oversee the installation of the piano. Don't let them butcher it, Cyrus. Detective Sergeant, you will be at the Institute?"

Lucius nodded. "The bodies should arrive by noon."

"Bodies?" I said.

"The two boys killed earlier this year," Laszlo answered, moving to the door. "Hurry, Moore, we'll be late!"

CHAPTER 13

True to Kreizler's prediction, Harris Markowitz proved thoroughly unsuitable as a suspect in our case. Aside from being short, stout, and well into his sixties—and thus wholly unlike the physical specimen described by the Isaacsons at Delmonico's—he was obviously quite out of his mind. He'd killed his grandchildren, he claimed, in order to save them from what he perceived to be a monstrously evil world, whose salient aspects he described in a series of rambling, highly confused outbursts. Such poor systemization of unreasonably fearful thoughts and beliefs, as well as the apparently complete lack of concern for his own fate that Markowitz exhibited, often characterized cases of dementia praecox, Kreizler told me as we left Bellevue. But while Markowitz clearly had nothing to do with our business, the visit was still valuable, as Laszlo had hoped it would be, in helping us determine aspects of our killer's personality by way of comparison. Obviously, our man was not murdering children out of any perverse desire to attend to their spiritual well-being. The furious mutilation of the bodies after death made that much plain. Nor, clearly, was he unconcerned with what would happen to him as a result of his acts. But most of all, it was apparent from his open display of his handiwork—a display that was, as Laszlo had explained, an implicit entreaty for apprehension—that the killings did disturb some part of him. In other words, there was evidence in the bodies *not of the murderer's derangement but of his sanity*.

I puzzled with that concept all the way back to Number 808 Broadway, but on arrival my attention was distracted by my first really clearheaded perusal of the place that, as Sara had said, would be our home for the foreseeable future. It was a handsome yellow-brick building, which Kreizler told me had been designed by James Renwick, the architect responsible for the Gothic edifice of Grace

Church next door, as well as for the more subdued St. Denis Hotel across the street. The southern windows of our headquarters looked directly out onto the churchyard, which lay in a dark shadow cast by Grace's enormous tapering spire. There was quite a parochial, serene feel about this little stretch of Broadway, despite the fact that we were smack in the center of one of the city's busiest shopping strips: besides McCreery's, there were stores selling everything from dry goods to boots to photographs within steps of Number 808. The single greatest monument to all this commerce was an enormous cast-iron building across Tenth Street from the church, formerly A. T. Stewart's department store, currently operated by Hilton, Hughes and Company, and eventually to gain its greatest fame as Wanamaker's.

The elevator at Number 808 was a large, caged affair, quite new, and it took us quietly back up to the sixth floor. Here we discovered that great progress had been made during our absence. Things were now so arranged that it actually looked like human affairs were being conducted out of the place, though one would still have been hard-pressed to say precisely what kind. At five o'clock sharp each of us sat at one of the five desks, from which vantage points we could clearly see and discuss matters with one another. There was nervous but pleasant chatter as we settled in, and real camaraderie when we began to discuss the events of our various days. As the evening sun dipped above the Hudson, sending rich golden light over the rooftops of western Manhattan and through our Gothic front windows, I realized that we had become, with remarkable speed, a working unit.

We had enemies, to be sure: Lucius Isaacson reported that at the conclusion of his examination of the other two murdered boys, a pair of men claiming to be representatives of the cemetery from which the bodies had been taken had appeared at the Institute, demanding an end to the proceedings. Lucius had gathered all the information he needed, by then, and decided not to put up a fight—but the physical description of the two men that he gave, right down to the bruises on their faces, matched the two thugs that had chased Sara and me out of the Santorellis' flat. Fortunately, the two ex-cops had not recognized Lucius as a detective (they had probably been fired before his arrival on the force); but it was nonetheless apparent that, as we had no idea who was commanding these men or what their object was, the Institute was no longer a safe place to conduct business.

As for Lucius's examination itself, the results were just what we'd hoped for: both bodies bore the same knife marks that had been found on Giorgio Santorelli and the Zweig children. With that confirmation, Marcus Isaacson took two more pins with red flags and stuck them

into the large map of Manhattan, one at the Brooklyn Bridge, and one at the Ellis Island ferry station. Kreizler posted the dates of those killings—January 1st and February 2nd—on the right-hand side of the large chalkboard, along with March 3rd, the day Giorgio had died. Somewhere in those months and days, we all knew, was one of the many patterns we needed to identify. (That pattern would ultimately prove far more complex, Kreizler believed from the start, than the apparent similarity of the number of the month and the number of the day.)

Marcus Isaacson told of his efforts, still unrewarded, to establish a method by which "Gloria" could have gotten out of his room at Paresis Hall without being seen. Sara informed us that she and Roosevelt had worked out a scheme whereby our group would be able to visit the sites of any future murders that were obviously the work of the same killer before they were disturbed by other detectives or by the heavy hands of coroners. The plan represented another risk for Theodore, but he was by now fully committed to Kreizler's agenda. For my part, I related the story of our trip to see Harris Markowitz. When all this business was concluded, Kreizler stood at his desk and indicated the large chalkboard, on which, he said, we would create our imaginary man: physical and psychological clues would be listed, cross-referenced, revised, and combined until the work was done. Accordingly, he next posted those facts and theories that we had so far discovered and hypothesized.

When he had finished, it seemed that there were precious few white marks on that enormous black space—and at least some of the few, Kreizler warned, would not remain. The use of chalk, he said, was an indication of how many mistakes he expected himself and the rest of us to make along the way. We were in uncharted country and must not become discouraged by setbacks and difficulties, or by the amount of material we would have to master along the way. The rest of us were a little confused by that statement; Kreizler then produced four separate but identical piles of books and papers.

Articles by Laszlo's friend Adolf Meyer and other alienists; the works of philosophers and evolutionists from Hume and Locke to Spencer and Schopenhauer; monographs by the elder Forbes Winslow, whose theories had originally inspired Kreizler's theory of context; and finally, in all its weighty, two-volume splendor, our old professor William James's *Principles of Psychology*—these and more were dropped on our desks, producing loud, ponderous booms. The Isaacsons, Sara, and I all exchanged worried glances, looking and feeling like beleaguered students on the first day of class—which,

obviously, is just what we were. Kreizler spelled out the purpose of our going through such an ordeal:

From that moment on, he said, we must make every possible effort to rid ourselves of preconceptions about human behavior. We must try not to see the world through our own eyes, nor to judge it by our own values, but through and by those of our killer. *His* experience, the context of *his* life, was all that mattered. Any aspect of his behavior that puzzled us, from the most trivial to the most horrendous, we must try to explain by postulating childhood events that could lead to such eventualities. This process of cause and effect—what we would soon learn was called "psychological determinism"—might not always seem entirely logical to us, but it would be consistent.

Kreizler emphasized that no good would come of conceiving of this person as a monster, because he was most assuredly a man (or a woman); and that man or woman had once been a child. First and foremost, we must get to know that child, and to know his parents, his siblings, his complete world. It was pointless to talk about evil and barbarity and madness; none of these concepts would lead us any closer to him. But if we could capture the human child in our imaginations—then we could capture the man in fact.

"And if that is not reward enough," Kreizler concluded, glancing from one of our gaping faces to another, "there is always food."

Food, we learned during the next few days, was quite a major reason why Laszlo had selected Number 808 Broadway: we were within easy walking distance of some of Manhattan's best restaurants. Ninth Street and University Place offered exceptional French dining at traditional Parisian *banquettes* in both the Café Lafayette and the small dining room of the proportionally small hotel run by Louis Martin. Should the mood run to German fare, we could trot up Broadway to Union Square and turn into that huge, darkly paneled Mecca of gourmands, Lüchow's. Tenth Street and Second Avenue offered hearty Hungarian meals at the Café Boulevard, while there was no better Italian cooking to be had than that served in the dining room of the Hotel Gonfarone, on Eighth and MacDougal streets. And, of course, there was always Del's, a bit further away but assuredly worth the trip. All these centers of culinary brilliance would become our informal conference rooms during legions of lunches and dinners, although there would be many occasions on which the grim work with which we were preoccupied made it difficult indeed to concentrate on gustatory satisfaction.

That was especially true during those first days, when it became increasingly hard to escape the knowledge that, although we were cutting a new path on this job and needed to take the time to study and understand all the psychological as well as criminological elements that would necessarily form the basis of a successful conclusion, we were also working against a clock. Out in the streets below our arched windows were dozens of children like Giorgio Santorelli, plying the ever-dangerous flesh trade without knowing that a new and especially violent danger was loose among them. It was an odd feeling, to go to an assessment with Kreizler or to study notes at Number 808 Broadway or to stay up until the small hours reading at my grandmother's, trying to force my mind to absorb information at a speed it was (to say the least) unaccustomed to, all the while a voice whispering in the back of my head: "Hurry up or a child will die!" The first few days of it almost drove me mad—studying and restudying the condition of the various bodies, as well as the sites at which they were discovered, trying to find patterns in both groups while simultaneously wrestling with passages like this one from Herbert Spencer:

"Can the oscillation of a molecule be represented in consciousness side by side with a nervous shock, and the two be recognized as one? No effort enables us to assimilate them. That a unit of feeling has nothing in common with a unit of motion, becomes more than ever manifest when we bring the two into juxtaposition."

"Give me your derringer, Sara," I remember calling out when I first ran across that statement. "I'm going to shoot myself." Why in the world should I have to understand such things, I wondered during that first week or so, when what I wanted to know was where, *where* was our murderer? Yet in time I came to see the point of such efforts. Take that particular Spencer quote, for example—I eventually grasped that the attempts of people like Spencer to interpret the activities of the mind as the complex effects of material motion within the human organism had failed. This failure had reinforced the inclination of younger alienists and psychologists like Kreizler and Adolf Meyer to view the origins of consciousness primarily in terms of formative childhood experience, and only secondarily in terms of pure physical function. That had real relevance, in terms of understanding that our killer's path from birth to savagery had not been the random result of physical processes that we would have been powerless to chart but rather the product of conceivable events.

Nor were our studies designed to debunk or defame: While Spencer's attempt to explain the origins and evolution of mental

activity might have been wide of the mark, there was no arguing his belief that what most men consider their rationally selected actions are in fact idiosyncratic responses (again, established during the decisive experiences of childhood) that have grown strong enough, through repeated use, to overpower other urges and reactions—that have won, in other words, the mental battle for survival. Obviously, the person we sought had developed a profoundly violent set of such instincts; it was up to us to theorize what terrible series of experiences had confirmed such methods, in his mind, as the most reliable reaction to the challenges of life.

Yes, it soon became clear that we needed to know all this and more, much more, if we were going to have any hope of fully fleshing out our imaginary man. And as that truth sank in, we all began to study and read with greater determination and speed, trading thoughts and ideas at all hours of the day and night. Sara and I would often shout heady philosophy over crackling telephone lines at two in the morning, much to my grandmother's despair, as we first groped and then more competently reached for greater knowledge. The rather remarkable fact that we were getting an extremely rapid education (the bulk of it was chewed and swallowed, if not completely digested, in the first ten days) was obscured by the practical task at hand, and by the attention we had to pay to whatever physical clues and methodical theories Marcus and Lucius Isaacson detected and devised. Not that there were many of these, in the beginning; we hadn't had enough access to any of the crime scenes for that. (Take the Williamsburg Bridge tower, for example: by the time Marcus examined it, there was no hope of gaining any relevant fingerprints—the place was an outdoor construction site, tampered with every day by weather and workmen.) The knowledge that we needed more than what we had to build a detailed picture of the killer's method only increased the morbidly expectant air in our headquarters. Though buried in our work, we were all aware that we were waiting for something to happen.

As March turned to April, it did. At 1:45 A.M. on a Saturday, I was dozing in my room at my grandmother's house with my copy of the second volume of Professor James's *Principles* resting rather uncomfortably across my face. That afternoon I'd begun a noble effort to tackle James's thoughts on "Necessary Truths and the Effects of Experience" at Number 808 Broadway but had been distracted by the entrance of Stevie Taggert, who'd torn a list of the following day's entries at the new Aqueduct racing park on Long Island from a late city edition of the *Herald* and wanted some advice on handicapping from me. I'd lately been employing Stevie as a runner to my betting

agent (unbeknownst to Kreizler, of course) and the boy had quite taken to the sport of kings. I'd encouraged him not to bet his own money unless and until he really knew what he was doing; but with his background that hadn't taken long. At any rate, when the telephone rang that night, I was in the midst of a deep sleep brought on by hours of thick reading. I bolted directly upright at the sound of the bell and sent the volume of James slamming against the opposite wall. The telephone clanged again as I got into my robe, and once more before I dashed through the hallway clumsily and picked the receiver up.

"Blank slate," I mumbled in a sleepy rush, assuming that the caller was Sara.

It was. "Excuse me?" she answered.

"What we were talking about this afternoon," I said, rubbing my eyes. "Is the mind a blank slate at birth, or do we have innate knowledge of certain things? My money's on the blank slate."

"John, be quiet for a moment." Her voice was tinged with anxiety. "It's happened."

That roused me. "Where?"

"Castle Garden. The Battery. The Isaacsons are getting their camera and other equipment ready. They have to arrive before the rest of us, so that the officer who was first on the scene can be dismissed. Theodore's there now, making sure it goes smoothly. I've already called Dr. Kreizler."

"Right."

"John—"

"Yes?"

"I've never—I'm the only one who's never—how bad will it be?"

What could I say? There were only practicalities to consider. "You'll want ammonia salts. But try not to worry too much. We'll all be there. Pick me up in a cab, we'll go together."

I heard her breathe deeply once. "All right, John."

PART II

Association

The same outer object may suggest either of many realities formerly associated with it—for in the vicissitudes of our outer experience we are constantly liable to meet the same thing in the midst of differing companions.

William James,
The Principles of Psychology

Whatever I thought right seemed bad to others;
whatever seemed wrong to me,
others approved of.
I ran into feuds wherever I found myself,
I met disfavor wherever I went;
if I longed for happiness, I only stirred up misery;
so I had to be called "Woeful":
Woe is all I possess.

Wagner,

Die Walküre

CHAPTER 14

By the time Sara reached Washington Square in a hansom, she'd dispatched many of her fears and replaced them with tough determination. Seemingly oblivious of several trivial questions I asked as we charged down the granite slab pavement of Broadway, she sat staring straight ahead, impassively focused on—what? She would not say, and it was impossible to assume with any certainty. My suspicion, however, was that she was preoccupied with that great guiding goal of her life, to prove that a woman could be a capable, effective police officer. Sights such as the one we were moving toward that night would become a regular part of Sara's professional duties if her career hopes were one day realized—she was quite aware of that. Submission to the sort of faintheartedness that was expected of her sex would therefore have been doubly unbearable and inexcusable, because it would have borne implications far beyond her personal ability to stomach savage bloodshed. And so she gazed at the back of our laboring horse and said barely a word, using every mental power she possessed to ensure that when the time came she would conduct herself as well as any seasoned detective.

All of which stood in some contrast to my own attempts to ease apprehension with idle chatter. By the time we reached Prince Street I'd gotten pretty tired of my own nervous voice; and by Broome I was just about ready to give up all attempts at communication in favor of watching the whores and their marks come out of the concert halls. On one corner a Norwegian sailor, so drunk he was drooling a river of spit down onto the front of his uniform, was being propped up by two dancers while a third slowly and brazenly went through his pockets. It wasn't an uncommon sort of sight; but on this night it planted a thought in my head.

"Sara," I said, as we crossed Canal Street and clattered on toward

City Hall. “Have you ever been to Shang Draper’s?”

“No,” she answered quickly, her breath condensing in the frigid air. April, as always in New York, had brought precious little respite from the biting cold of March.

It wasn’t much of an opening for conversation, but I took it. “Well, it’s just that the average whore who works a disorderly house knows more ways to shake down a mark than I could probably list—and the children who work in a place like Draper’s, or Paresis Hall, for that matter, are as sharp as any adults. What if our man’s one of those marks? Suppose he was cheated one time too many and now he’s out to settle the score? It was always a theory in the Ripper killings.”

Sara shifted the heavy blanket that covered our laps, still not exactly what I’d call interested. “I suppose it might be possible, John. What makes you think of it now?”

I turned to her. “Those three years, between the Zweigs and our first murder this past January—what if our theory, that there were other bodies and that they’re well hidden, is wrong? What if he didn’t commit any other murders in New York—because he wasn’t here?”

“Wasn’t here?” Sara’s tone became more animated. “You mean, he took a trip? Left town?”

“What if he had to? A sailor, for instance. Half the marks in places like Draper’s or Ellison’s are seamen. It might make sense. If he were a regular customer, he wouldn’t have aroused any suspicion—he might even have known the boys.”

Sara thought it over, then nodded. “It’s not bad, John. It would certainly allow him to come and go without being noticed. Let’s see what the others think when we…” Her speech hitched up a bit, and then she turned back toward the street, anxious again. “When we get there.”

Things grew quiet inside the hansom once more.

Castle Garden sits in the heart of Battery Park, and to get to it we had to travel to the base of Broadway and beyond. That meant a fast trip through the pastiche of architectural styles that made up the publishing and financial districts of Manhattan in those days. On first glance, it was always a bit odd to see structures like the *World* Building and the dozen-storied National Shoe and Leather Bank looming (or at least, in those days before the Woolworth and Singer

towers, they *seemed* to be looming) over such squat, ornate Victorian monuments as the Old Post Office and the headquarters of the Equitable Life Assurance Society. But the longer one was exposed to the neighborhood, the more one detected a common quality among all these buildings that overrode any stylistic variance: wealth. I had spent much of my childhood in this part of Manhattan (my father ran a moderately sized investment house) and from an early age I'd been struck by the fantastic activity that surrounded the getting and keeping of money. This activity could be alternately seductive and repellant; but by 1896 it was unarguably New York's strongest reason for being.

I felt this undercurrent of enormous power again that night, even though the district was dark and dormant at two-thirty in the morning; and as we passed the graveyard at Trinity Church—where the father of the American economic system, Alexander Hamilton, lay buried—I found myself smiling bemusedly and thinking: He's audacious, all right. Whoever our quarry was, and whatever the personal turmoil that was propelling him, he was no longer confining his activities to the less respectable parts of town. He had ventured into this preserve of the wealthy elite and dared to leave a body in Battery Park, within easy sight of the offices of many of the city's most influential financial elders. Yes, if our man was in fact sane, as Kreizler so passionately believed, then this latest act was not only barbarous but audacious, in that peculiar way that has always produced a mixture of horror and grudging acknowledgment in natives of this city.

Our hansom released us at Bowling Green, and we crossed over to enter Battery Park. Kreizler's calash stood at the curb on Battery Place, with Stevie Taggert aboard and huddled in a large blanket.

"Stevie," I said. "Keeping an eye out for the precinct boys?"

He nodded and shivered. "And staying away from that," he said, nodding toward the interior of the park. "It's a awful business, Mr. Moore."

Inside the park, a very few arc lights directed us along a straight path toward the prodigious stone walls of Castle Garden. Formerly a heavily armed fort called Castle Clinton, the structure had been built to guard New York during the War of 1812, after which it was turned over to the city and converted into a covered pavilion that saw years of use as an opera house. In 1855 it was transformed again, into New York's immigration station; and before Ellis Island usurped that role in

1892, no fewer than seven million transplanted souls had passed through the old stone fort in Battery Park. City officials had recently been casting around for some new use to make of the thing, and had decided on housing the New York Aquarium inside its round walls. That remodeling was now under way, and the telltale signs of construction greeted Sara and me even before we could clearly make out the fort's walls against the night sky.

Under those walls we found Marcus Isaacson and Cyrus Montrose standing over a man who wore a long greatcoat and had a wide-brimmed hat clutched tightly in his hands. There was a badge pinned to the man's coat, but at the moment he looked anything but authoritative: He was seated on a pile of cut boards, holding his pale face over a bucket and breathing hard. Marcus was trying to ask him some questions, but the fellow was clearly in some kind of shock. We approached, and both Cyrus and Marcus nodded our way.

"The watchman?" I asked.

"Yes," Marcus answered. His voice was energized but tightly controlled. "He found the body at about one o'clock, on the roof. Apparently he makes his rounds every hour or so." Marcus leaned over the man. "Mr. Miller? I'm going back upstairs. Take your time, come back up when you're ready. But under no circumstances are you to leave. All right?" The man looked up, his dark, grizzled features full of horror, and nodded blankly. Then he quickly bent over the bucket again, though he didn't retch. Marcus turned to Cyrus. "Make sure he stays put, will you, Cyrus? We need a lot more answers than we've gotten."

"All right, Detective Sergeant," Cyrus answered, and then Marcus, Sara, and I went through the mammoth black gates of Castle Garden.

"The man's a wreck," Marcus said, jerking his head back toward the watchman. "All I've gotten out of him is a passionately sworn statement that at twelve-fifteen the body was not where it is now, and that these front doors were bolted. The rear doors were chained, I've checked them—no sign of tampering with the locks. I'm afraid it's all very reminiscent of the Paresis Hall situation, John. No way in or out, but someone managed it all the same."

The renovation of the interior walls of Castle Garden was only half-finished. On the floor space between all the lathing, plaster, and paint sat a series of huge glass water tanks, some under construction, some finished but unfilled, and some already housing their designated

occupants: various species of exotic fish, whose wide eyes and skittish movements seemed all too appropriate, given what had occurred in their new home that night. Flashes of silver and brilliantly colored scales caught the light of a few dim worklamps that were on, increasing the eerie impression that the fish were a terrified audience searching for a way out of this place of death and back to those deep, dark regions where men and their brutal ways were unknown.

We climbed an old staircase in one wall of the fort, eventually emerging above the shell that had been built over the old ramparts to cover the formerly open central yard. A decagonal turret with two windows in each face stood at the center of the roof, which offered a commanding view of New York harbor and Bartholdi's still-new statue of Lady Liberty out on Bedloe's Island.

Near the edge of the roof closest to the waterfront were Roosevelt, Kreizler, and Lucius Isaacson. Next to them stood a large, boxy camera on a wooden tripod, and lying in front of the camera, bathed in the light of another worklamp, was the cause of our coming together. The blood was visible even from a distance.

Lucius's attention was fixed on the body, but Kreizler and Roosevelt were facing away and talking very heatedly. When Kreizler saw us emerge from the staircase he came directly over, Roosevelt following behind and shaking his head. Marcus moved to the camera as Laszlo addressed Sara and me.

"Based on the condition of the body," Kreizler said, "there would seem to be little doubt. It's our man's work."

"A roundsman from the Twenty-seventh Precinct was first on the scene," Theodore added. "He says he can remember seeing the boy regularly at the Golden Rule, though he doesn't recall any name." (The Golden Rule Pleasure Club was a disorderly house on West Fourth Street that specialized in boy-whores.)

Kreizler put his hands on Sara's shoulders. "It's not an easy sight, Sara."

She nodded. "I didn't expect it to be."

Laszlo studied her reactions carefully. "I'd like you to assist the detective sergeant with his postmortem—he's aware of your training as a nurse. It won't be long before the precinct investigators arrive, and there's much for each of us to do before then."

Sara nodded again, breathed once deeply, and moved toward Lucius and the body. Kreizler began to speak to me, but I put him off for a moment and trailed a few steps behind Sara as she moved toward the glowing hemisphere of electric light in the corner of the rooftop.

The body was that of an olive-skinned boy, with delicate Semitic features and thick black hair on the right side of his head. On the left side, a large section of scalp had been torn away, revealing the slick surface of the skull. Other than that, the mutilations seemed to be identical to those that had marked Giorgio Santorelli (except that the injuries to the buttocks had not been repeated): the eyes were missing, the genitals had been cut off and stuffed in the mouth, the torso was crisscrossed by deep lacerations, the wrists were bound, and the right hand had been severed and apparently removed from the scene. As Kreizler had said, there seemed little doubt about who was responsible. It was all as distinctive as a signature. That same terrible sense of pathos that I'd felt on the Williamsburg Bridge anchor—prompted not only by the age of the victim but as well by the cruel way in which the body was trussed and pushed to the ground—returned to steal my breath and rattle what seemed every bone in my body.

I watched Sara carefully without moving closer, ready to assist if she should be overcome, but not wishing her to think that I expected her to be. Her eyes, as they took in the sight, went wide and her head shook, quickly and quite visibly. She clasped her hands together tightly, took another deep breath, and then stood by Lucius.

"Detective Sergeant?" she said. "Dr. Kreizler says I'm to assist you."

Lucius looked up, impressed at Sara's composure, and then wiped his forehead with a handkerchief. "Yes. Thank you, Miss Howard. We'll begin with the injury to the scalp…"

I headed back to Kreizler and Roosevelt. "That's one gutsy girl," I said with a shake of my head, but neither of them acknowledged the remark.

Kreizler slapped a newspaper on my chest and spoke bitterly. "Your friend Steffens has written quite an article for the morning edition of the *Post,* John. How, *how* could anyone be so stupid?"

"There's no excuse," Roosevelt said glumly. "I can only think that Steffens considered the story fair game, so long as he didn't reveal your involvement in the case, Doctor. But I'll have him in my office

first thing this morning and, by thunder, I'll make the situation clear to him!"

Prominently displayed on the *Post*'s front page was an article announcing that the Zweig killings and the Santorelli murder were now believed by "high police officials" to be the work of the same man. The article made less out of the apparently unusual nature of the killer than out of the fact that the link to the Zweigs demonstrated that the "ghoulish fiend" was not drawn exclusively to child prostitutes: It was now clear, Steffens declared in his best rabble-rousing style, that "no children are safe." There were other sensational details, as well: Santorelli, it was stated, had been "assaulted" before his death (in fact, Kreizler had found no evidence of sexual violation), and in some quarters of the city the murders were being talked of as the work of a supernatural creature—though "the infamous Ellison and his cohorts" made "far more promising suspects."

I folded the paper and tapped it slowly against my leg. "This is very bad."

"Bad," Kreizler said, controlling his anger, "but done. And we must try to undo it. Moore, is there any chance that you can persuade your editors to run a piece in the *Times* denouncing all this as speculation?"

"It's possible," I answered. "But it would tip them off to my involvement in the investigation. And they'd probably have someone dig deeper once they knew that much—the connection to the Zweigs is going to make a lot of people a lot more interested in this."

"Yes, if we attempt to counteract this, I suspect we'll only make things worse," Theodore pronounced. "Steffens must be told to keep quiet, and we must hope that the article is ignored."

"How can it be?!" Laszlo erupted. "Even if every other person in this city fails to pay attention, there is *one* who will see it—and I fear, I truly *fear,* his reaction!"

"And do you imagine that I don't, Doctor?" Theodore countered. "I knew the press would interfere eventually—that's why I urged you to hurry your efforts. You can hardly expect to go for weeks without *someone* mentioning the matter!"

Theodore put his hands to his hips, and Kreizler turned away, unable to say anything in reply. After a few moments Laszlo spoke again, more calmly, this time. "You're right, Commissioner. Instead of arguing we should be making use of the opportunity we have now.

But for God's sake, Roosevelt—if you must share official business with Riis and Steffens, make this an exception."

"There's no need to worry on that account, Doctor," Roosevelt answered, in a conciliatory tone. "This isn't the first time Steffens has annoyed me with his speculations—but it will be the last."

Kreizler shook his head in disgust once more, then shrugged. "Well, then. To work."

We joined the Isaacsons and Sara. Marcus was busy taking detailed photographs of the body as Lucius continued his postmortem, calling out the injuries in a flurry of medical and anatomical jargon, his voice steady and full of purpose. Indeed, it was remarkable how little either detective displayed those quirks of behavior that were usually a cause of laughter or consternation in observers: they moved around the rooftop in a flurry of cerebral inspiration, locking onto apparently insignificant details like trained dogs and taking charge of business as if they, not Roosevelt or Kreizler, were directing the investigation. As their efforts continued, all of us, even Theodore, lent them every possible assistance, taking notes, holding pieces of equipment and lights, and generally making sure that there was no need for either of them to break their concentration even for a moment.

Once he had finished photographing the body, Marcus left Lucius and Sara to complete their grim work and began to "dust" the rooftop for fingerprints, using the small vials of aluminum and carbon powders that he'd shown us at Delmonico's. Roosevelt, Kreizler, and I, meanwhile, went to work finding surfaces that might be smooth and hard enough to "hold" such prints: door handles, windows, even an apparently new ceramic chimney that ran along the side of the decagonal tower just a few feet from where the body lay. This last site was the one that bore fruit, primarily because, Marcus told us, the watchman had rather lazily allowed the fire downstairs to go out hours earlier. By a particularly clean section of the glazed ceramic, at about the point where a man of the height Marcus and Lucius had posited for our killer would have rested his hand were he leaning against the chimney for support, Marcus put his face close and grew agitated. He told Theodore and me to hold up a small tarpaulin that would block the wind that blew in off the harbor. Then he spread the carbon powder on the chimney with a delicate camel's hair brush and produced, one can only say magically, a set of smudgelike prints. Their position was exactly consistent with the hypothetical lean of the killer.

Taking the photograph of Sofia Zweig's bloodstained thumb from his coat pocket, Marcus held it up against the chimney. Laszlo moved close and watched the whole process carefully. Marcus's dark eyes went very wide as he studied the prints, and they were positively afire when he turned to Kreizler and said, in a notably controlled voice, "It looks like a match." At that, he and Kreizler went for the big camera, while Theodore and I continued to hold the tarp. Marcus took several close shots of the prints, the burst of the flash powder illuminating the whole roof area but quickly dissipating in the blackness out over the harbor.

Next Marcus had us inspect the ledges of the roof for, as he put it, "Any signs of disturbance or activity—even the smallest chips, cracks, or holes in its masonry." Now, a building that faces New York harbor is going to have a lot of chips, cracks, and holes in its masonry; but we dutifully set about the task, Roosevelt, Kreizler, and myself each shouting when we located something that seemed to conform to our vague instructions. Marcus, whose attention was focused on a sturdy railing that surmounted the front of the roof, ran over to inspect each of these finds. Most of the sightings proved false; but on the very back of the roof, in the darkest, most hidden corner of the structure, Roosevelt found some marks that Marcus evidently thought bore immense potential.

His next request was rather odd: having taken a rope and tied one end around his waist, he wrapped the bulk of the coil around a section of the roof's front railing and then handed it to Roosevelt and me. We were instructed to let the rope out as Marcus descended along the rear wall of the fort. When we asked the purpose behind this, Marcus only said that he was working on a theory about the killer's method of reaching apparently inaccessible spots. So great was the detective sergeant's fixation on his work, along with our own desire not to distract him, that we asked for no further explanation.

As we lowered him down the wall, Marcus occasionally made noises of discovery and satisfaction, then told us to lower him further. Roosevelt and I would then grunt and struggle again with the rope. In the midst of all this, I took the opportunity to acquaint Kreizler (who, with his bad arm, had elected not to assist us) with the thoughts concerning the occupation and habits of our killer that had occurred to me on the way downtown. His reaction was thoughtful, though mixed:

"You may have something with the notion of his being a regular customer at the houses where these boys work, Moore. But as for the

man's being a transient of some kind…" Laszlo strolled over to watch Lucius Isaacson work. "Consider what he's done—deposited six bodies, six that we know of, in increasingly public places."

"It does," Theodore said with a small roar as we let out more rope, "suggest a man familiar with the city."

"Intimately familiar," Lucius threw in, having heard our comments. "There's no sense of haste about these injuries. The cuts aren't jagged or ripped. So he probably wasn't in any particular hurry. My guess would be that, in this and every other case, he's known exactly how long he has to do his work. He probably selects his sites accordingly. That would match our previous assumption that he's a capable planner. And the work with the eyes, again, reveals a very careful, steady hand—as well as a fair knowledge of anatomy."

Kreizler considered that for a moment. "How many men would be capable of it, Detective Sergeant?"

Lucius shrugged. "We've got several options as I see it. A doctor, of course, or at least someone with more than cursory medical training. A skilled butcher, possibly—or perhaps a very practiced hunter. Someone accustomed to making full use of a carcass, who would know not only how to dress the principal meat sections but the secondary sources of food, as well—the eyes, innards, feet, and the rest."

"But if he's so careful," Theodore asked, "why commit these atrocities in the open? Why not go to a more hidden place?"

"The display," Kreizler answered, walking back to us. "The thought that he's in a publicly accessible spot seems to mean a great deal to him."

I said, "The desire to be caught?"

Kreizler nodded. "So it would appear. Dueling with the desire to escape." He turned to look out over the harbor. "And there are other aspects that these sites have in common…"

Just then we got a loud shout from Marcus telling us to pull him up. On Theodore's count we gave out with several long, laborious heaves, bringing Marcus quickly back to the rooftop. To Kreizler's questions about what he'd found, Marcus replied that he didn't wish to speculate until he was fairly certain of his theory; he then moved off to make a few notes, as Lucius called out:

“Dr. Kreizler? I’d like you to look at this.”

Kreizler went immediately over to the body, but Theodore and I moved with more trepidation—there was only so much of it the untrained eye could take. Even Sara, who had started out so bravely, was now averting her eyes whenever possible, the prolonged exposure apparently exacting quite an emotional toll.

“When you examined Giorgio Santorelli, Doctor,” Lucius said, as he removed the short length of twine that bound the dead boy’s wrists, “do you remember finding any abrasions or lacerations in this area?” He held up the victim’s left hand, indicating its base.

“No,” Kreizler answered simply. “Other than the severing of the right hand there was nothing appreciable.”

“And no lacerations or bruising of the forearm?” Lucius inquired.

“None.”

“Yes. It would support what we’ve already hypothesized.” Lucius let the dead arm drop, then mopped his brow. “That’s fairly coarse twine,” he continued, pointing first at the bit of cord on the rooftop, and then at the boy’s wrist again. “Even during a brief struggle it should have left significant marks.”

Sara looked from the twine to Lucius. “Then—there was no struggle?” And in the way she said it there was real sadness, sadness that reverberated heavily in my chest—for the implication was obvious. Lucius went on to state it:

“It’s my suspicion that the boy allowed himself to be tied, and that even during strangulation, he made very little attempt to fight against the murderer. He may not have been fully aware of what was happening. You see, if there’d been an attack and actual resistance, we’d also find cuts or at least bruises on the forearms, made when the boy tried to fend the assault off. But again, there’s nothing. So…” Lucius glanced up at us. “I’d say the boy knew the killer. They may even have engaged in this kind of binding on other occasions. For… sexual purposes, in all likelihood.”

Theodore sucked air sharply. “Good lord…”

Watching Sara’s face again, I saw a glint in the corners of her eyes: welling tears that she blinked away quickly.

“That last part’s just a theory, of course,” Lucius added. “But I feel very confident in saying the boy knew him.”

Kreizler nodded slowly, his eyes narrowing and his voice going soft: “Knew him—and trusted him.”

Lucius finally stood and turned away from the body. “Yes,” he said, switching the worklamp off.

At that, Sara got to her feet in a sudden movement and rushed to the edge of the roof farthest from where we were standing. The rest of us glanced at each other questioningly, and then I went after her. Approaching slowly, I saw that she was looking out at Lady Liberty, and I confess to some surprise at not finding her heaving with sobs. Instead her body was quite still, even rigid. Without turning she said:

“Please don’t come any closer, John.” Her tone, far from hysterical, was icily even. “I’d rather not have any men around me. Just for a moment.”

I stood awkwardly still. “I’m—sorry, Sara. I only wanted to help. You’ve seen a lot tonight.”

She let out a bitter little chuckle. “Yes. But there’s nothing you can do to help.” She paused, but I didn’t leave. “And to think,” she continued at length, “that we actually thought it might have been a woman…”

“Thought?” I said. “So far as I know, we still haven’t ruled it out.”

“Perhaps the rest of you haven’t. I don’t suppose you could be expected to. You’re working at a disadvantage, in that area.”

I turned when I felt a presence at my side and found Kreizler carefully moving closer. He indicated silence to me as Sara spoke on:

“But I can tell you, John—that’s a man’s work, back there. Any woman who would have killed the boy wouldn’t have…” She groped for words. “All that stabbing, binding, and poking…I’ll never understand it. But there’s no mistaking it, once you’ve…had the experience.” She chuckled once grimly. “And it always seems to begin with trust…” There was another very awkward pause, during which Kreizler touched my arm and with a movement of his head told me to return to the other side of the roof. “Just leave me for a few minutes, John,” Sara finally finished. “I’ll be fine.”

Kreizler and I moved away quietly, and when we were out of Sara's hearing Laszlo murmured, "She's right, of course. I've never come across any feminine mania—puerperal or otherwise—that could compare to this. Though it probably would have taken me a ridiculously long time to realize it. We must find more ways to take advantage of Sara's perspective, John." He glanced around quickly. "But first we must get out of here."

While Sara remained at the edge of the roof, the rest of us set to work gathering up the Isaacsons' equipment and removing all traces of our presence, primarily the little splotches of aluminum and carbon powder that dotted the area. As we did so, Marcus initiated a conversation concerning the fact that half of the six murders we now felt confident assigning to our killer had occurred on rooftops: a significant fact, for rooftops in the New York of 1896 were secondary but nonetheless well-worn routes of urban travel, lofty counterparts to the sidewalks below that were full of their own distinctive types of traffic. Particularly in the tenement slums, a broad but definable range of people sometimes did a full day's business without ever descending to the street—not only creditors seeking payment, but settlement and church workers, salesmen, visiting nurses, and others. Rents in the tenements were generally scaled in proportion to the amount of exertion required to reach a given flat, and thus the most unfortunate residents occupied the top floors of buildings. Those who had business with these poorest of the poor, rather than braving the steep and often dangerous staircases repeatedly, would simply move from one high floor to another by way of the rooftops. True, we still didn't know just how our man was getting *to* those rooftops; but it was clear that once there he made his way around with great skill. The possibility that he had once held, or currently did hold, one of those roof-traveling jobs was therefore worth exploring.

"Whatever his occupation," Theodore announced, coiling the rope we'd used to lower Marcus down the wall, "it would take a cool mind to plan this kind of violence so precisely and then carry it out so thoroughly, when he knows that the possibility of apprehension is never very far off."

"Yes," Kreizler answered. "It almost suggests a martial spirit, doesn't it, Roosevelt?"

"What's that?" Theodore turned to Kreizler with an almost injured look. "Martial? That was not my meaning, Doctor—not my meaning at all! I would be loath indeed to call this the work of a soldier."

Laszlo smiled a bit, devilishly aware that Theodore (who was still years away from his exploits on San Juan Hill) viewed the military arts with the same boyish reverence he had since childhood. “Perhaps,” Kreizler needled further. “But a cool head for carefully planned violence? Isn’t that what we endeavor to instill in soldiers?” Theodore cleared his throat loudly and stomped away from Kreizler, whose smile only broadened. “Make a note of it, Detective Sergeant Isaacson,” Laszlo called out. “A military background of some kind is definitely indicated!”

Theodore spun around once more, eyes wide; but he only managed to bellow “By thunder, sir!” before Cyrus burst out of the staircase, as alarmed as I could remember ever having seen him.

“Doctor!” he shouted. “I think we’d better get moving!” Cyrus raised one of his big arms to point north, and all our eyes followed the indication.

At the edges of Battery Park, near the several points of entry, crowds were gathering: not the kind of well-dressed, politely behaved throngs that occupied the area during the day, but milling pockets of shabbily dressed men and women on whom the mark of poverty was plain even from a distance. Some carried torches and several were accompanied by children, who seemed to be thoroughly enjoying this unusual early morning foray. As yet there were no overt signs of threat, but it had all the makings of a mob.

CHAPTER 15

Sara came and stood by me. “John—who are they?”

“Offhand,” I answered, feeling a different and a more vital sense of concern than I had at any point during that night, “I’d say that the morning edition of the *Post* has reached the streets.”

“What do you suppose they want?” Lucius asked, his head sweating more than ever despite the cold.

“They want an explanation, I expect,” Kreizler answered. “But how did they know to come *here*?”

“There was a cop from the Twenty-seventh Precinct,” Cyrus said, still very anxious, for it had been a mob much like the one we now faced that had tortured and killed his parents. “He was down there with two other men, explaining something to them. Then those two fellas went into the crowd and started talking it up pretty good, about how it’s only poor foreign kids that’re getting killed. Seems most of those people out there come from over on the East Side.”

“The officer was, no doubt, Roundsman Barclay,” Theodore said, his face full of that particular anger that was inspired by treacherous subordinates. “He’s the man who was here earlier.”

“There goes Miller!” Marcus said suddenly, at which I looked down to see the watchman fleeing without his hat toward the Bedloe’s Island ferry station. “Fortunately I kept his keys,” Marcus added. “He didn’t look like a man who’d be around long.”

Just then the noise of the largest group of people, who were straight ahead of us and quite visible through the branches of the park’s still-

bare trees, began to grow louder, reaching a crescendo with a couple of venomous yells. We heard a clatter of horses' hooves and carriage wheels, and then Kreizler's calash appeared, barreling down the main path of the park toward the castle. Stevie held his horsewhip high and drove Frederick hard, around the front walls of the fort to the pair of large doors in the rear.

"Good man, Stevie," I murmured, turning to the others. "That'll be our best way out—through the back doors and up the river side of the park!"

"I suggest we get to it," Marcus said. "They're moving."

With another series of shouts, the crowd at the main entrance came into the park, at which the groups to their right and left also began to surge forward. It now became clear that there were still more people streaming into the area from surrounding streets—the mob would soon number in the many hundreds. Someone had done an expert job of inflammation.

"The devil!" Theodore grunted ferociously. "Where is the night watch from the Twenty-seventh? I'll have them over hot coals!"

"An ideal plan for the morning," Kreizler said, making for the staircase. "At the moment, however, escape seems imperative."

"But this is a crime scene!" Theodore continued indignantly. "I will not have it disturbed by any mob, whatever their complaint!" He glanced about the roof, then picked up a stout section of cut wood. "Doctor, none of you can be found here—take Miss Howard and go. The detective sergeants and I will face these people at the front gate."

"We will?" It had gotten out of Lucius's mouth before he quite knew what he was saying.

"Steel yourself," Roosevelt answered with a grin, grabbing Lucius's shoulder heartily and then taking a few good cuts at the night air with his piece of wood. "After all, this fort defended us from the British Empire—it can certainly withstand a mob from the Lower East Side!" It was one of those moments when you wanted to slap the man, even if there was sense in his blustering.

In order to conceal completely the nature of our work, it was necessary for the rest of us to take the Isaacsons' equipment away in the calash. Having made our way back down and through the tanks of fish, we stowed the various boxes on board the carriage, and then I

turned to wish the Isaacsons good luck. Marcus seemed to be searching the ground for something, while Lucius was checking a police-issue revolver uncomfortably.

"You may not be able to avoid a fight," I said to them, with a smile that I hoped was reassuring, "but don't let Roosevelt force you into one."

Lucius only groaned a bit, but Marcus smiled bravely and shook my hand. "We'll meet you at Number 808," he said.

With that they closed the fort's rear doors and replaced the chains and locks. I jumped up and grasped the side of the calash—Kreizler and Sara were already in the two seats, and Cyrus was up top with Stevie—and we started with a jolt down a path that took us to the harbor's edge and then northward along the river. The noise of the crowd outside Castle Garden had continued to grow, but as we passed within sight of the fort's front gates the angry shouts suddenly subsided. I strained my head around to see Theodore outside the structure's heavy black portal, calmly holding his club with one hand and pointing toward the edge of the park with the other. The action-crazed fool simply couldn't stay safely inside. The Isaacsons were in the doorway behind him, ready to rebolt the doors at a moment's notice. But that didn't look to be necessary—the crowd actually seemed to be listening to Theodore.

As we approached the northern edge of the park, Stevie picked up speed, and nearly ran us headlong into a phalanx of about twenty cops as they trotted toward Castle Garden. We took a hard left at Battery Place in order to keep to the deserted waterfront, and as we did I got a brief but clear glimpse of an expensive brougham that was parked at a corner which enjoyed a full view of the events at the fort. A hand—well manicured, with a tasteful silver ring on the little finger—appeared at the brougham's door, followed by the upper part of a man's body. Even in the dim light of the arc lamps I could see the gleam of an elegant tie stud, and soon a set of handsome Black Irish features: Paul Kelly. I yelled to Kreizler and told him to look, but we were moving too fast for him to catch a glimpse. When I related what I'd seen, however, his face showed that he'd drawn the obvious conclusion.

The crowd, then, had been Kelly's work, probably in response to Steffens's remarks about Biff Ellison in the *Post*. It all fit—Kelly was not known for making idle threats, and whipping up a fury over the murders among a deeply and perpetually disgruntled segment of the

populace would have been child's play for so devious a man. Nevertheless, the move had almost cost our team dearly, indeed I feared it might still do so; and as I continued to cling to the side of the speeding calash, I vowed that, should anything happen to Theodore and the Isaacsons, I would hold the chief of the Five Pointers personally responsible.

Stevie didn't ease up on Frederick at any point during our ride home, and no one asked him to—each of us, for his or her own reasons, wanted to put some distance on Castle Garden. There were pools of rainwater in many of the roughly paved streets on the West Side, and by the time we reached Number 808 Broadway I was splattered with mud, cold as the tomb, and ready to call it a night (or a morning, since dawn was not far off). But the job of dragging the equipment upstairs and recording our thoughts on the murder while they were still fresh remained, and we set about it dutifully. When the elevator reached the sixth floor, Kreizler discovered that he had misplaced his key, and I gave him mine, which was caked with mud. Overall, it was a bedraggled, exhausted little group that filed into headquarters at 5:15 A.M. that Saturday.

My surprise and joy were all the greater, therefore, when the first thing that greeted my senses was the smell of steak and eggs frying and strong coffee brewing. A light was on in the small kitchen at the rear of our floor, and I could see Mary Palmer—dressed not in her blue linen uniform but in a pretty white blouse, a plaid skirt, and an apron—moving about in quick, capable motions. I dropped the cases I was lugging.

"God has sent me an angel," I said, stumbling toward the kitchen. Mary started a bit when she saw my muddy frame coming out of the shadows, but her blue eyes soon settled down and she showed me a little smile, offering a bit of hot, sizzling steak on the end of a long fork and then a cup of coffee. I started to say, "Mary, how did you…," but quickly abandoned the attempt and concentrated on the delicious food and drink. She had quite a production going: a legion of eggs and what looked like sides of lean beef in deep iron skillets that she must have brought from Kreizler's house. I could have stayed in there for quite a while, bathing in the warmth and the aromas; but as I turned back around, I found Laszlo standing behind me, his arms folded and a sour scowl on his face.

"Well," he said. "I suppose I know now what happened to my key."

I assumed his admonishment was in jest. "Laszlo," I said through a

mouthful of steak, “I believe I may actually revive—”

“Will you excuse Mary and me for a moment, Moore?” Kreizler said, in the same hard tone; and from the look on the girl’s face, I could see that she knew he was quite serious, even if I didn’t. Instead of questioning him, however, I scooped some eggs and a bit more steak onto a plate, grabbed my mug of coffee, and headed for my desk.

As soon as I was out of the kitchen I heard Kreizler start to lecture Mary in no uncertain terms. The poor girl was unable to offer any reply other than an occasional no and a small, quiet sob. It didn’t make sense to me; for my money she’d done yeoman service, and Kreizler was being inexplicably mean. My thoughts were soon distracted, however, by Cyrus and Stevie, who hovered over my plate in drop-jawed hunger.

“Now, now, boys,” I said, covering my food with my arms. “No need to get physical. There’s plenty more in the kitchen.”

They both bolted energetically toward the back, straightening up only slightly when they encountered Kreizler. “Get something to eat,” Laszlo told them brusquely, “and then take Mary back to Seventeenth Street. Quickly.”

Stevie and Cyrus each mumbled assent, and then descended on the unsuspecting steak and eggs. Kreizler pulled one of the Marchese Carcano’s green chairs between Sara’s and my desks and fell into it wearily.

“You don’t want anything to eat, Sara?” Laszlo asked quietly.

She had her head on her arms on top of her desk, but picked it up just long enough to smile and say, “No. Thank you, Doctor, I couldn’t. And I don’t think Mary would appreciate my presence in the kitchen.” Kreizler nodded.

“A little hard on the girl, weren’t you, Kreizler?” I said, as sternly as I could manage through more mouthfuls of food.

He sighed once and closed his eyes. “I’ll have to ask you not to interfere, John. It may seem severe—but I don’t want Mary to know anything about this case.” He opened his eyes and looked toward the kitchen. “For a variety of reasons.”

There are moments in life when one feels as though one’s walked into the wrong theater during the middle of a performance. I was

suddenly aware of some very odd chemistry at work among Laszlo, Mary, and Sara. I couldn't have put a label on it, not if I'd been paid; but as I pulled a bottle of good French cognac from the bottom drawer of my desk and added some of it to my still-steaming coffee, I became increasingly aware that the air in the large room had suddenly become charged. This instinctive feeling was confirmed when Mary, Stevie, and Cyrus came out of the kitchen and Kreizler asked for his key back. Mary returned it reluctantly, and then I caught her shooting Sara a quick, angry scowl as she went out the door with the other two. No doubt about it—there was a subtext to all this activity.

But there were more important issues at hand, and with Mary, Stevie, and Cyrus gone, the rest of us were free to begin trading thoughts on them. Kreizler went to the chalkboard, which he had divided into three general areas: CHILDHOOD on the left-hand side, INTERVAL in the center, and ASPECTS OF THE CRIMES to the right. In their proper areas Laszlo began to jot down the theories that we had come up with on the roof of Castle Garden, leaving a small space for any salient insights that the Isaacsons might have had since we left them. Kreizler then stood back to review the list of details; and though it offered, to my way of thinking, evidence of a good night's work, Laszlo seemed to find it wanting. He tossed his bit of chalk up and down, shifting from one foot to the other, and finally announced that there was one more significant factor we must make note of: in the top right-hand corner of the board, under the heading ASPECTS OF THE CRIMES, he chalked the word WATER.

That baffled me; but Sara, after giving it some thought, pointed out that every one of the murders since January had taken place within sight of a large amount of water—and the Zweigs had actually been deposited *in* a water tower. When I asked if that wasn't just a coincidence, Kreizler said that he doubted so careful a schemer as our killer left very much to coincidence. Laszlo then walked to his desk and pulled an old leather-bound volume from one stack of books. As he switched on a small desk lamp I braced myself, expecting some lengthy technical quote from the likes of Professor Mosso of Turin (who, I'd recently learned, was doing groundbreaking research in measuring the physical manifestations of emotional states). But what Laszlo read, in a quiet, tired voice, was something quite different:

"'Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.'"

Kreizler switched off the desk lamp and sat back down. I took a blind stab and guessed that the quote was from the Bible, to which

Laszlo nodded, remarking that he never ceased to be amazed at the number of references to cleansing that could be found in religious works. He was quick to add that he did not necessarily believe that our man suffered from a religious mania or dementia (although such afflictions had characterized more mass murderers than almost any other form of mental distress); rather, he was citing the quote to indicate, somewhat poetically, the extent to which the killer was oppressed by feelings of sin and guilt, for which water was the usual metaphorical antidote.

That remark stuck in Sara's craw. In a troubled, somewhat impatient voice she noted that Kreizler persistently returned to the notion that our killer was aware of the nature of his actions, and desired apprehension—yet at the same time the man continued to go out and slaughter young boys. If we accepted the supposition of his sanity, then we were left with the nagging question of what possible satisfaction or benefit he could be deriving from the butchery. Before replying to this pointed observation, Laszlo paused, considering his words carefully. He knew, as did I, that it had been a long and bewildering night for Sara. I also knew that after viewing one of those bodies the last thing one wanted to hear was a descriptive analysis of the mental context of the man responsible; the sadness, anger, and horror were all too great. But the fact remained that such an analysis was imperative, especially at that vivid moment. Sara must be coaxed back to the task immediately before us, a goal that Laszlo approached obliquely by asking her some gentle, seemingly unconnected questions:

Imagine, he said, that you enter a large, somewhat crumbling hall that echoes with the sounds of people mumbling and talking repetitively to themselves. All around you these people fall into prostrate positions, some of them weeping. Where are you? Sara's answer was immediate: in an asylum. Perhaps, Kreizler answered, but you could also be in a church. In the one place the behavior would be considered mad; in the other, not only sane, but as respectable as any human activity can be. Kreizler went on to try some other examples: If a woman and her children were threatened with every kind of violence by a group of attackers, and the only weapon at the mother's disposal was something along the lines of a meat cleaver, would Sara consider the woman's necessarily gruesome efforts to dispatch the men the work of a mad savage? Or if another mother were to learn that her husband was beating and having sexual relations with their children, and she cut his throat in the middle of the night, would that qualify as unacceptable brutality? Sara said that, while she would answer no to those questions, she also considered such cases very

different from the one we were presently dealing with. That brought a quick rejoinder from Laszlo: The only difference, he declared, was among Sara's perceptions of the various examples. An adult protecting a child, or a child protecting itself, was apparently a context in which Sara could justify even fearsome violence; but what if our murderer viewed his current work as just that sort of protection? Could Sara shift her point of view enough to grasp that every victim and situation leading up to a murder resonated within the killer to a distant experience of threat and violence and led him for reasons that we had not yet fully defined to take angry measures in his own defense?

Sara remained more reluctant than unable to follow all this; I, on the other hand, was surprised to find my own thoughts falling right into line with Kreizler's. Perhaps the brandy was pushing my mind past its usual limits; whatever the case, I piped up to say that each dead body seemed, in the light Laszlo was casting, to be a kind of mirror. Kreizler lifted a satisfied fist and said, Precisely—the bodies were a mirror image of some savage set of experiences that were central to the evolution of our man's mind. Whether we took the biological approach, and concentrated on the formation of what Professor James called "neural pathways," or the philosophical route, which would lead into a discussion of the development of the soul, we would arrive at the same conclusion: the idea of a man for whom violence was not only deeply ingrained behavior but the starting point of his meaningful experiences. What he saw when he looked at those dead children was only a representation of what he felt had been done to him—even if only physically—at some point deep in his past. Certainly, when *we* looked at the bodies our first thoughts were of vengeance for the dead and protection of future victims. Yet the profound irony was that our killer believed he was providing himself with just those things: vengeance for the child he had been, protection for the tortured soul he had become.

Despite the care Kreizler took in explaining all this to Sara, the effort brought no change in her attitude. It was simply too soon to expect her to put the experience of Castle Garden away and get back to business. She shifted and writhed in her chair, shaking her head and protesting that everything Kreizler said sounded like a somewhat absurd rationalization: Laszlo was comparing the emotional and physical trials of childhood with the worst kind of adult blood lust, she stated defiantly, whereas no such correlation existed—the two phenomena were out of all proportion to each other. Kreizler answered that such might seem to be the case, but only because Sara was deciding the proportions herself, based on the context of *her* experience. Anger and destructiveness were not the guiding instincts

of her life—but what if they had been, since long before she'd become capable of conscious thought? What mere physical action could satisfy such deep-seated rage? In the case of our man, not even the brutal killings could achieve it; had they been able to, he would still have been quietly going about his business, hiding the bodies and never courting discovery.

Seeing that all these sound points were continuing to have little effect on our intransigent partner, I took the opportunity to suggest that we all try to get some sleep. The sun had begun to creep up over the city during our talk, bringing with it that state of extreme disorientation that accompanies most all-night vigils. I'm sure that Kreizler also knew that rest would put many things right; all the same, he made one last request, as Sara left with me, that she not allow horror and anger to lead her too far from the course of our undertaking. Her role had, that night, been revealed as even more important than he'd originally thought it: Our murderer had spent his childhood among men *and* women, and whatever else the rest of us could suppose about the women involved in those experiences, our theories would never amount to more than a badly flawed set of assumptions. It would be up to Sara to provide us with a different perspective, to create for us a woman (or series of women) who might have helped foster such rage. We could not succeed without that.

Sara nodded wearily at the thought of this new responsibility, and I knew I'd better get her away from Kreizler, who was exhausting enough even on a full night's sleep. I opened the front door and guided her out into the elevator, and as we descended to the ground the only audible sound was the quiet, strangely comforting hum of the device's engine echoing in the dark shaftway.

On the first floor we ran into the Isaacsons, whose return had been delayed not by the mob at Castle Garden (which had dissipated fairly soon after our departure) but by Theodore, who had insisted that they accompany him to one of his favorite Bowery haunts for a victory breakfast of steak and beer. The two detective sergeants looked just as exhausted as Sara and I, and since they had to go up and report before they'd be allowed any sleep, we didn't talk much. Marcus and I made a quick plan to meet the following afternoon and venture over to the Golden Rule Pleasure Club, and then it was into the elevator for them and out to find a cab on largely deserted Broadway for Sara and myself.

There weren't many hacks braving the early morning cold, though what few there were had mercifully congregated outside the St. Denis

Hotel across the street. I helped Sara into a hansom, but before giving the driver her destination she looked up at the still-lit windows of the sixth floor of Number 808.

"He never seems to stop," she said quietly. "It's almost as if—as if he has a personal stake in it."

"Well," I answered, yawning broadly, "a lot of his professional ideas could be validated by the result."

"No," Sara said, still quietly. "Something else—something more…"

Following her gaze up to our headquarters, I decided to express a concern of my own: "I wish I knew what was going on with Mary."

Sara smiled. "You never were the most romantically perceptive man, John."

"Meaning?" I asked, genuinely baffled.

"Meaning," Sara answered, somewhat indulgently, "that she's in love with him." As I stood there agape, she tapped on the roof of the hansom. "Gramercy Park, driver. Goodbye, John."

Sara was still smiling as the cab pulled around and headed up Broadway. A couple of the other hacks asked me if I also needed a rig, but after that last bit of intelligence I could only shake my head blankly. Maybe the walk—or, as it was, stumble—home would help me make some sense of it, I thought; but I couldn't have been more wrong. The implications of Sara's statement, and the look on her face as she delivered it, were all too bizarre to be made sense of in a few weary minutes. All the walk did was exhaust me further, and by the time I hit the sheets in my grandmother's house I was far too weak in body and disturbed in spirit to even remove my muddy clothes.

CHAPTER 16

An altogether unpleasant mood took hold of me during my sleep, and I woke at noon to find that my temper had shortened to a lamentable extent. This black outlook deepened when a messenger boy appeared with a note from Laszlo, written that morning. Apparently a Mrs. Edward Hulse of Long Island had been arrested during the night after trying to kill her own children with a carving knife. Though the woman had been released into her husband's custody, Kreizler had been asked to assess her mental condition, and had invited Sara along. There was no thought of establishing a connection between Mrs. Hulse and our case, Laszlo explained; rather, Sara's interest (which, sure enough, had been revitalized by several hours' sleep) was in assembling details of character for the imaginary women that Laszlo had asked her to create as a way of further understanding our imaginary man. None of this was cause for annoyance on my part; it was more the way Kreizler phrased it all, as if he and Sara were off for a pleasant, stimulating day in the country together. As I crumpled the note up, I acidly wished them a lovely time; and I believe I spat in a sink afterwards.

A telephone call from Marcus Isaacson set our meeting for five o'clock, at the El station at Third Avenue and Fourth Street. I then dressed and surveyed the possibilities for my own afternoon—they appeared few and bleak. Emerging from my room, I discovered that my grandmother was giving a luncheon; the party consisted of one of her dim-witted nieces, the niece's equally engaging husband (who was a partner in my father's investment firm), and one of my second cousins. All three guests were full of questions about my father, questions that I, having been out of touch with him for many months, had no way of answering. They also made a few polite inquiries about my mother (who I did know was at that moment traveling in Europe

with a companion), and politely dodged the subject of my former fiancée, Julia Pratt, whom they were acquainted with socially. The entire conversation was punctuated by insincere smiles and chuckles, and its general effect was to make me thoroughly morose.

The truth is, it had been many years since I'd been able to speak pleasantly with most members of my family, for reasons that, while powerful, were not difficult to explain. Right after I got out of Harvard, my younger brother—whose passage into adulthood had been even more troubled than my own—had fallen off a Boston boat and drowned. A lengthy autopsy revealed what I could have told anyone if they'd asked: that my brother had been a habitual user of alcohol and morphine. (During his last years he'd become a regular drinking companion of Roosevelt's younger brother, Elliot, whose life was also ended by dipsomania some years later.) The funeral that followed was full of respectful but perfectly nonsensical tributes, all of which avoided the subject of my brother's adult battle with terrible bouts of melancholy. There were many causes of his unhappiness, but at heart I believe now, as I believed then, that it was essentially the result of growing up in a household, and a world, where emotional expression of any kind was at best frowned on and at worst strangled. Unfortunately, I stated this opinion during the funeral, and was nearly forced into an asylum as a result. Relations between myself and my family had never quite recovered. Only my grandmother, who had doted on my brother, displayed any understanding of my behavior or any willingness to allow me into her home and her life. The rest of them regarded me as at least mentally impaired, and perhaps downright dangerous.

For all these reasons, the arrival of my relatives on Washington Square that day was a sort of crowning blow, and my disposition could not have been worse as I walked out the front door of the house into the chilly day. Realizing that I had absolutely no idea where I was going, I sat down on the steps, hungry and cold—and suddenly aware that I was jealous. The realization was so surprising that my tired eyes popped fully open. Somehow my unconscious mind had drawn some unpleasant conclusions from the pieces of information that I had received the night before: if Mary Palmer was in fact in love with Kreizler, and she saw Sara as a threat, and both Kreizler and Sara were aware of it, and Kreizler didn't want Mary around as a result, but had no trouble spending swimming little spring afternoons with Sara—well, it was all fairly clear. Sara was obviously entranced by the mysterious alienist; and the iconoclastic Kreizler, who'd only had one romance in his life that I knew of, was taken with Sara's fiercely independent ways. Not that it was a romantic sort of jealousy that had

crept into me; I had only considered an amorous link with Sara once, years ago, and then just for a few drunken hours. No, I was more injured at the thought of being excluded. On such a morning (or afternoon) a jaunt to Long Island with friends would definitely have been beneficial.

I spent several minutes debating whether or not I should call on an actress with whom I'd passed many days (and still more nights) since the end of the Julia Pratt business; and then, for no reason that I could divine, my thoughts turned to Mary Palmer. Bad as I felt, she must have been feeling worse, if what Sara had said to me was true. Why not make a quick trip up to Stuyvesant Park, I mused, and give the girl an afternoon out? Kreizler might not approve; but Kreizler was off having a pleasant day with a splendid girl, and his complaints were therefore invalid. (Thus did spite work its inevitable way into my thoughts.) Yes, as I walked by the new arch at the north end of Washington Square Park, the idea only grew more appealing—but where exactly to take the girl?

On Broadway I corralled several paperboys, and relieved them of some of their wares. The previous night's events at Castle Garden received much attention on the front pages. Apparently there was growing concern over the mood in the immigrant neighborhoods. A citizens' committee was being formed to go to City Hall and express concern about both the murders and, more emphatically, the possible effect of those crimes on civic order. All of which meant little or nothing to me at that particular moment—I quickly turned to the entertainment pages. The pickings seemed slim, until I caught a notice for Koster and Bial's theater on Twenty-third Street. In addition to singers, gymnastic comedians, and a Russian clown, Koster and Bial were offering a program of short projected films, the first ever in New York, according to the notice. It seemed the right fare, and the theater was certainly convenient to Kreizler's house. I grabbed the first cab I saw.

Mary was alone in the house on Seventeenth Street when I arrived, and in as depressed a mood as I'd expected to find her. She was also, at first, very resistant to the idea of venturing out. She looked away from me and shook her head vigorously, pointing around the rooms as if to indicate that her housekeeping chores were too extensive for her to even consider such an idea. But I had been inspired by the notion of cheering someone up: I described the bill at Koster and Bial's with rare zest and to her wary glances replied that the outing would be nothing more than an expression of thanks for the excellent early morning breakfast. Reassured and obviously excited, she soon gave in and

fetched her coat, as well as a small black hat. Not a sound escaped her as we went out of the house, but she smiled in a very pleased and grateful way.

For an idea that had grown out of such questionable feelings, this turned out to be a remarkably good one. We got into our seats at Koster and Bial's, a very average theater of only moderate capacity, just as a music hall comedy team from London was winding up its performance. We were in time for the Russian clowns, whose silent antics Mary quite enjoyed. The comedic gymnasts, who threw barbs and jokes at each other while executing some truly remarkable physical feats, were also good, though I could have lived without the French singers and a rather strange dancer who followed them. The audience was large but good-natured, and Mary seemed to enjoy watching them almost as much as the acts.

There were no wandering eyes, however, when a glittering white screen descended across the proscenium and the house went completely black. Light flashed from somewhere behind us, and then there was near-panic in the first few rows when we were all faced with the image of a wall of blue seawater seemingly crashing into the theater. Naturally, none of us was familiar with the phenomenon of projected images, an experience that in this case had been heightened by the hand-tinting of the black-and-white film. After order had been restored in the theater and the first offering, "Sea Waves," had come to an end, we were treated to eleven other brief subjects, including a pair of "Burlesque Boxers," and some less amusing pictures of the German kaiser reviewing his troops. Sitting there in that nondescript theater one hardly had the sense that one was witnessing the advent of a new form of communication and entertainment that would, in the hands of such modern masters as D. W. Griffith, drastically change not only New York City but the world; I was far more concerned with the fact that those flickering, tinted images brought Mary Palmer and me closer together for a brief time, relieving the loneliness that was for me transitory and for her a permanent aspect of existence.

It wasn't until we were back out on the street that my mental repose was turned to restless inquisitiveness by the training I'd struggled through during the last several weeks. As I watched my very pleased, very attractive companion enjoying the cold, bright afternoon, I wondered: How could this girl have killed her father? I fully appreciated that there were few things so reprehensible as a man violating his own daughter; but there were other girls who'd endured the experience without chaining the guilty party to a bed and roasting him alive. What had pushed Mary to the act? The beginnings of an

explanation, I soon realized, were quite easy to detect even years after the fact. As Mary watched the dogs and pigeons in Madison Square Park, or when her blue eyes were captured by such glittering treasures as the enormous golden statue of naked Diana atop the square spire of Madison Square Garden, her lips moved as if to give expression to her pleasure—and then her jaws clamped closed, her face displaying a fear of what incoherent, humiliating noises might emerge should she try to speak. I remembered that Mary had been considered idiotic in her youth; and most children are anything but kind to idiots. In addition, her mother had considered her fit for nothing more than charwork. Thus by the time her father's sexual advances began, Mary must already have been so frustrated and tormented that she was near ready to explode. Removal of any one of these disadvantages and wretched experiences might have changed the outcome of her life; together, they wove a fatal pattern.

Perhaps life had been very similar for our killer, I posited as Mary and I entered Madison Square Garden in order to have a cup of tea in the arcade restaurant on the roof. By now I had realized that a companion's extensive chatter only made Mary feel more keenly her inability to participate verbally, so I began to communicate through smiles and gestures, privately pursuing what seemed a fertile line of psychological reasoning as I did so. With Mary sipping her tea and craning her neck in order to gather all the sights that were available from the excellent vantage point of the Garden's roof arcade, I remembered what Kreizler had said the night before: that violence, for our murderer, had been the childhood starting point. In all likelihood that meant beatings administered by adults—such would fit with Laszlo's theory that there were both self-protective and vengeful instincts at work in the man. But thousands of young boys suffered such torment. What had pushed this one, like Mary, over a seemingly indefinable but very real line into violence? Had he, too, suffered from some crippling impairment or deformity that during his youth made him an object of derision and scorn, not only on the part of adults, but of other children as well? And, having endured this, had he gone on to suffer (again like Mary) some sort of outrageous, degrading sexual assault?

It still seems odd that so lovely a girl as Mary Palmer should have inspired me to such grim cogitations; but odd or no, I felt I was onto something, and wanted to get Mary back to Kreizler's place so that I could meet Marcus Isaacson on time and share my thoughts with him. I felt a bit bad about ending an outing that had brought Mary such apparent joy—by the time we reached Stuyvesant Park she was absolutely radiant—but she also had duties to attend to; and her mind

was brought back to them in a rush, I could see, when she spotted Kreizler's calash sitting outside the house on Seventeenth Street.

Stevie was brushing the horse Frederick down, while Kreizler was standing and smoking a cigarette on the small iron balcony that ran outside the French windows of the parlor on the second floor. Both Mary and I braced for trouble as we entered the small front yard; and we were both surprised when a very genuine smile came into Kreizler's face. He took out his silver watch, checked the time, and spoke in a cheerful voice:

"You two must have had quite an afternoon—was Mr. Moore a satisfactory host, Mary?"

Mary smiled and nodded, then rushed to the front door. There she turned and, after removing the small black hat, said "Thank you" with a big smile and only a trace of difficulty. Then she disappeared inside, and I looked up at Kreizler.

"I believe we may yet get spring, John," he said, indicating Stuyvesant Park with a wave of his cigarette. "Despite the cold, the trees are budding."

"I thought you'd still be on Long Island," I answered.

He shrugged. "There's little for me to learn there. Sara, on the other hand, seemed quite fascinated by Mrs. Hulse's attitude toward her children, so I left her. It may prove very useful for her, and she can take a train back tonight." That seemed a bit strange, given the theories I'd cooked up earlier that day; but Kreizler's manner was quite normal. "Will you come up for a drink, John?"

"I've got to meet Marcus at five—we're going to explore the Golden Rule. Any interest?"

"A great deal of interest," he answered. "But it will be better if I'm not seen in too many places associated with the case. I trust the pair of you to take copious mental notes. Remember—the keys will be in the details."

"Speaking of that," I said, "I've had some ideas that I think may be useful."

"Excellent. We'll discuss them at dinner. Telephone me at the Institute when you've finished. I've a few things to see to there."

I nodded and turned to depart; but my perplexity was too strong to leave matters so unresolved.

"Laszlo?" I said uncertainly. "You're not angry that I took Mary out this afternoon?"

He shrugged simply again. "You didn't discuss the case with her?"

"No."

"Then, on the contrary, I'm grateful. Mary isn't exposed to enough people and new experiences. I'm sure it will have an excellent effect on her disposition."

And that was that. I turned back around and headed through the gate, leaving behind the slight inkling into the behavior of my friends that I thought I'd achieved that morning. I got onto the Third Avenue El at Eighteenth Street and headed downtown, trying to keep my thoughts away from other people's personal business and on the case. By the time we passed Cooper Square, I was actually succeeding; and when I met Marcus at Fourth Street, I was ready to pay close attention to his most recent theories on our murderer's method, a recitation that took up most of our time during the march across town to the Golden Rule Pleasure Club.

CHAPTER 17

The notion of our killer's being an experienced mountain and rock climber had first occurred to Marcus, he explained, when I brought the boy Sally's story back from Paresis Hall. But when he'd tried to find evidence of such activity at the Williamsburg Bridge anchor, and then at the Hall, he'd come up with almost nothing, and thought of abandoning the idea. His mind kept being brought back to the idea, however, by the speed with which the man had negotiated some pretty tricky spots, as well as by the absence of any ladders or other, more conventional climbing apparatus. There could be no other explanation, to Marcus's way of thinking: the murderer had to be using advanced mountaineering techniques to get in and out of the windows of his intended victims' rooms. That the man was especially expert was indicated by the fact that he must have been carrying the boys when he left the buildings, since they almost certainly knew nothing about climbing. All of this was consistent with the idea, already stated by the Isaacsons at Delmonico's, that the killer was a big, powerful man. Faced with all these considerations, Marcus had done some more detailed research into climbing techniques, and returned to the bridge anchor and Paresis Hall.

This time, his better-trained eye had indeed found marks on the exterior walls of Ellison's joint that could have been left by a climber's nail-studded boots, as well as by pitons, large steel spikes that climbers drive into rock with hammers for direct hand and foot support, and also as anchors for ropes. The marks were hardly conclusive, so he hadn't mentioned them at any of our meetings. But at Castle Garden Marcus had discovered distinctive rope fibers along the rear edge of the rooftop: a further suggestion that the killer was a climber. The fibers seemed to lead to the front railing of the roof, which turned out to be very solidly anchored. That had been the point

at which Marcus had told us to lower him down the rear wall of the fort, where he found more marks that matched those he'd discovered at the Hall. At that point, Marcus had begun to work out a probable sequence of events for the Castle Garden killing:

The murderer, with his latest victim on his back, had climbed to the roof of the fort using pitons. (The watchman hadn't noticed the sound of the hammering because, Marcus had learned, he actually spent most of his time sleeping, a fact of which Marcus was sure the killer was aware.) Once on the roof, our man had committed the murder, then wrapped a rope around the front railing and rappelled back to the ground. This last was a European term for the technique of descending a sheer mountainside by way of a rope that had been looped around a secure anchor point above. Both strands of the rope were then dropped, so that the whole could be pulled down by the climber when he reached the bottom. As our killer lowered himself along the wall, he'd been able to remove the pitons he'd used for support earlier.

Satisfied with his reasoning, Marcus had first attempted to find specific evidence to support it at Paresis Hall, since the Santorelli murder was long past and there weren't likely to be any policemen around. But then he'd realized that at the Hall the killer would have been descending from the roof, not coming up from the ground, and probably wouldn't have used pitons at all (the marks Marcus had originally thought to be left by pitons at that site were therefore made by something else, probably something altogether unconnected to our case). So Marcus had returned to Castle Garden just before meeting me, and continued a search of the grounds that he'd barely begun the night before—I'd been right when I thought he was looking for something just before our hasty departure from that place. The few cops who were positioned at Castle Garden that afternoon were nowhere near the rear entrance of the fort, and so Marcus had been free to scour that area.

At this point in his tale, my companion reached into his coat pocket and pulled out a rather innocuous steel spike that he'd discovered lying in some grass. The thing had an eye at one end: for securing ropes, Marcus told me. He'd dusted the piton for prints once he'd gotten it home, and found a set that exactly matched those we'd taken from the ceramic chimney the night before. I had to give the man a firm, admiring slap on the back, at that: Marcus was as dogged as any detective I'd met during the years I'd been covering the police beat, and considerably more intelligent. It was small wonder he hadn't gotten along with the old guard at the Division of Detectives.

For the remainder of our walk Marcus went on to explain the larger implications of his discovery. Though mountaineering hadn't really caught on as a form of recreation in North America as of 1896, in Europe the sport was well established. Throughout the last century, expert teams on that continent had knocked off peaks in the Alps and the Caucasus, and one intrepid German had even ventured to East Africa and conquered Mount Kilimanjaro. Nearly all these groups, Marcus told me, had been either English, Swiss, or German; and in those countries mountain and rock climbing of a less ambitious nature had become a very popular form of recreation. Given that our killer displayed what could only be called expertise, it was likely that he'd been exposed to the sport quite a long time ago, perhaps even in his youth; and it was therefore very possible that his family had immigrated to America from one of those three European nations in the not-too-distant past. That might not mean much just at the moment; but it was easy to see that, when added to other crucial factors further down the road, it could become highly illuminating. In such knowledge there was real cause for hope.

We would need an abundant reservoir of that particular emotion during our visit to the Golden Rule Pleasure Club, a pestilential little hole that could not have had a more sadly ironic name. Paresis Hall at least had the advantages of being aboveground and fairly roomy; the Golden Rule was housed in a dank, cramped basement that had been divided into small "rooms" by shoddy partitions, where any one client's activities were made known to everyone in the place by sound if not by sight. Run by a large, repulsive woman called Scotch Ann, the Golden Rule offered only effeminate young boys who painted themselves, spoke in falsetto voices, and called each other by women's names, leaving the other variations on male homosexual behavior to joints like Ellison's. In 1892 the Golden Rule had gained notoriety when the Reverend Charles Parkhurst, a Presbyterian pastor and head of the Society for the Prevention of Crime, had visited the place during his campaign to bare the links between New York's criminal underworld and various agencies of the city government, particularly the Police Department. Parkhurst, a strong, noble-looking fellow who was far more tolerable than most antivice crusaders, had enlisted a private detective, Charlie Gardner, as a guide for the odyssey. Charlie was an old friend of mine, and he'd immediately invited me to come along on what promised to be a thoroughly entertaining spree.

By 1892, however, the fires of my youth had begun to cool, and I'd started to make a strong run at mending my reprobate ways. Wondering if perhaps there wasn't something to the idea of a stable, peaceful existence, both professional and domestic, I'd fixed my eyes

on Washington politics and Julia Pratt, and was not prepared to jeopardize either my journalistic or my romantic standing by throwing in with Charlie Gardner for even one night. Thus my only contribution to Reverend Parkhurst's soon-to-be-famous adventure was a short list of dives and hells that I thought the group should visit. Visit them they did, along with many other centers of infamy; and subsequent written accounts of Parkhurst's exposure to the realm of vice generally —and to the Golden Rule in particular—made polite society's hair stand on end.

It was Parkhurst's revelations about how very degenerate life in much of New York had become, and how very much many members of the city government profited from that degeneracy, that led to a New York State Senate committee's investigation of official corruption in the city. Headed by Clarence Lexow, the committee ended up calling for "an indictment against the Police Department of New York City as a whole," and many members of the old police guard felt the sting of reform. As I've said before, however, degeneracy and corruption are not passing aspects but permanent features of life in New York; and while it has always been pleasant to think, when listening to such righteously outraged speakers as Parkhurst, Lexow, Mayor Strong, and even Theodore, that one is hearing the voice of the solid base of the city's population, walking into a place like the Golden Rule never fails to bring one hard up against the fact that the drives and desires that spawn such joints—drives that would bring ostracism and even prosecution in any other part of the United States —have at least as many disciples and defenders as does "decent society."

Of course, the defenders of decent society and the disciples of degeneracy are often the same people, as became clear to Marcus when we entered the nondescript front door of the Golden Rule on that Saturday evening. Almost immediately, we came face-to-face with a round-bellied, middle-aged man in expensive evening clothes, who shielded his face as he exited the place and then hurried into a very expensive carriage that was waiting for him at the curb. Behind him came a boy of fifteen or sixteen, typically dolled up for a night's work and counting money with great satisfaction. The boy called something after the man in the usual grating falsetto register that was, for the uninitiated, so strange and disturbing; and then he walked by us very playfully, promising a full evening's entertainment should we choose him from among his mates. Marcus turned immediately away and stared at the ceiling, but I answered the boy, telling him we were not customers and that we wanted to see Scotch Ann.

“Oh,” the boy droned languorously in his natural voice. “More cops, I guess. Ann!” He moved toward a large room farther inside the basement, from which emanated raucous laughter. “There’s more *gentle*-men about the murder!”

We followed the boy for a few steps, stopping at the entrance to the large room. Inside it were a few pieces of once ostentatious but now-decrepit furniture, and over the cold, moldy floor was thrown a well-worn Persian carpet. On the carpet was a squatting, half-naked man in his thirties, who crawled about and laughed as several even more scantily dressed boys vaulted over him.

“Leapfrog,” Marcus mumbled, taking it in with a nervous glance. “Didn’t they lure Parkhurst into something like that when he came here?”

“That was at Hattie Adams’s, up in the Tenderloin,” I answered. “Parkhurst didn’t last long in the Golden Rule—when he found out what actually went on here he bolted.”

Sauntering out from the area of the back rooms came Scotch Ann, heavily painted, obviously drunk, and well past her prime, if indeed she had ever had one. A flimsy pink dress clung to her powdered body (rising so high on her chest that one could not say if she was, in fact, a woman at all), and her face bore the harassed, weary scowl common to disorderly house owners when presented with an unexpected visit from the law.

“I don’t know what you want, boys,” she said, in a gruff voice that’d been destroyed by alcohol and smoking, “but I already pay two precinct captains five hundred bucks a month each to let me stay open. Which means there’s nothing left over for fly cops. And everything I know about the murder I already told one detective—”

“That’s lucky,” Marcus said, showing his badge and taking Ann by the arm toward the front door. “Then it’s all fresh in your mind. But don’t worry, information is all we want.”

Somewhat relieved that her recitation would cost her nothing, Scotch Ann gave forth with the story of Fatima, originally Ali ibn-Ghazi, a fourteen-year-old Syrian boy who had been in America just over a year. Ali’s mother had died within weeks of the family’s arrival in New York, after picking up a lethal disease down in the Syrian ghetto near Washington Market. The boy’s father, an unskilled laborer, had subsequently been unable to find any work at all, and

took to begging. He put his children on display in order to spur the generosity of passersby, and it was while Ali was serving in this capacity, on a corner near the Golden Rule, that Scotch Ann first caught sight of him. The boy's delicate Near Eastern features made him, as Ann put it, "a natural for my place." She quickly "came to terms" with the father, terms that closely resembled indenture or perhaps even slavery. Thus was born "Fatima," at the mention of which absurd appellation I discovered that I was rapidly losing patience with the practice of renaming young boys so that they could be proferred to adult men who either had inane scruples about who they molested or were aroused by particularly ridiculous perversions. "She was a real moneymaker," Scotch Ann told us. I felt like belting the woman, but Marcus pursued the investigation calmly and professionally. Ann could provide us with few other particulars about Ali, and became concerned when we said we wanted to both see the room out of which he'd worked and interview any boys who were particularly friendly with him.

"I suppose there weren't many," Marcus said casually. "He was probably a difficult young man."

"Fatima?" Ann said, pulling her head back. "If she was, I never knew about it. Oh, she could play the hellcat with the customers—you'd be surprised how many of them like that kind of thing—but she never complained, and the other girls seemed to dote on her."

Marcus and I exchanged a quick, puzzled look. The statement didn't match the pattern we'd come to expect concerning the victims. As we followed Ann down a dirty little corridor that ran among the partitioned rooms in the back, Marcus puzzled with this apparent inconsistency, then nodded and murmured to me, "Wouldn't *you* mind your manners around someone you'd been sold in bondage to? Let's wait and see what the rest of the girls say. *Boys,* I mean." He shook his head. "Damn it, now they've got *me* doing it."

The other boys who worked in the Golden Rule, however, provided no information that substantially contradicted their whoremistress. Standing in the narrow corridor and individually interviewing over a dozen painted youths as they exited from their partitioned rooms (forced, all the while, to listen to the obscene grunts, groans, and declarations of lust that emerged from those confines), Marcus and I were consistently presented with a portrait of Ali ibn-Ghazi that lacked any angry or obstreperous details. It was disturbing, but we had no time to dwell on it, for the last rays of daylight were fading and we needed to examine the outside of the building. As soon as the

room Ali had regularly used, which faced an alleyway behind the club, had been vacated by a furtive pair of men and an exhausted-looking boy, we entered it, braving the warm, humid atmosphere and the smell of sweat in order to check Marcus's theory about the killer's method of movement.

Here, at least, we found what we were looking for: a filthy window that could be opened, above which were four stories of sheer, unencumbered brick wall leading to the roof of the building. We would need to get a look at that roof before the sun set fully; nevertheless, as we left the little chamber, I paused long enough to ask one momentarily idle boy in a neighboring room what time Ali had left the Golden Rule on the night of his death. The young man frowned and struggled with the question a bit as he stared in a cheap slab of decaying mirror.

"Damn me—that's peculiar, ain't it?" he said, in a tone that seemed too jaded to be coming from so young a mouth. "Now that you mention it, I don't remember ever seeing him go." He threw up a hand and went on with his work. "But I was probably engaged. It was the weekend, after all. One of the other girls must've seen her leave."

But the same question, put a few more times to various painted faces as we walked out of the club, brought similar answers. Ali's departure, then, had almost certainly been effected through the window in his room, and then up the rear wall of the building. Marcus and I ran outside, up to the first-floor entrance and the small vestibule, then into a vermin-infested staircase that wound up to a pitch-black doorway splattered with tar that opened onto the roof. Our quick movements were inspired by more than the dying sunlight: we both knew that we were tracing our killer's steps more precisely than we'd been able to do before, and the effect was both chilling and exhilarating.

The roof was like any other in New York, spotted with chimneys, bird droppings, ramshackle utility sheds, and the odd bottle or cigarette end that indicated the occasional presence of people. (Because it was early in the spring and still chilly, there were none of the signs of regular habitation—chairs, tables, hammocks—that would appear during the summer months.) Like a hunting dog, Marcus strode directly to the back of the slightly sloped rooftop and, with no thought to the height, peered over and into the alley. Then he removed his coat, spread it below him, and lay down on his stomach so that his head hung out over the edge of the building. A broad smile came to his face within moments.

“The same marks,” he said without turning. “All consistent. And here—” His eyes focused on a close spot and he picked something that was invisible to me out of one of the many patches of tar. “Rope fibers,” he said. “He must’ve anchored it to that chimney.” Following Marcus’s pointing finger, I glanced at a squat brick structure toward the front of the roof. “That’s a lot of rope. Plus the other pieces of equipment. He’d need a bag of some kind to carry it all in. We ought to mention that when we’re asking around.”

Studying the monotonous expanse of the other roofs on the block I said, “He probably wouldn’t have come up through this building’s staircase—he’s smarter than that.”

“And he’s familiar with getting around on rooftops,” Marcus answered, as he got to his feet, pocketed some of the rope fibers, and picked up his coat. “I think we can be pretty sure, now, that he’s spent a lot of time on them—probably in some kind of professional capacity.”

I nodded. “So it wouldn’t be tricky for him to size up every building on the block, find the one with the least activity, and use its staircase.”

“Or ignore the staircases altogether,” Marcus said. “Remember, it’s late at night—he could scale the walls without anybody seeing him.”

Looking to the west, I saw that the reflective expanse of the Hudson River was quickly turning from bright red to black. I turned fully around twice in the near-darkness, seeing the entire area in a new way.

“Control,” I mumbled.

Marcus stayed right with me: “Yes,” he said. “This is his world, up here. Whatever mental turmoil Dr. Kreizler sees in the bodies, this is very different. On these rooftops he’s acting with complete confidence.”

I sighed and shook as a river breeze hit us. “The confidence of the devil himself,” I mumbled, and was surprised when I got an answer:

“Not the devil, sir,” said a small, frightened voice from somewhere back by the door to the stairs. “A saint.”

CHAPTER 18

"Who's there?" Marcus said sharply, moving toward the voice cautiously. "Come out, or I'll have you up for interfering with police business!"

"No, please!" the voice answered, and then one of the painted youths from the Golden Rule, one I didn't recall having seen downstairs, stepped out from behind the stairway door. The makeup on his face was badly smudged, and he had a blanket pulled around his shoulders. "I only want to help," he said in a pathetic voice, his brown eyes blinking nervously. With a sinking feeling I realized that he could not have been more than ten years old.

Taking hold of Marcus's arm and pulling him back, I urged the boy forward. "That's all right, we know you do," I said. "Just come out into the open." Even in the increasingly dim light of the rooftop I could see that the boy's face, as well as the blanket he was huddled in, were smudged with soot and tar. "Have you been here all night?" I guessed.

The boy nodded. "Ever since they told us." He was starting to weep. "This wasn't supposed to happen!"

"What?" I asked urgently. "What wasn't? The murder?"

At the mention of the word the boy clamped his small hands over his ears and shook his head insistently. "He was supposed to be good, Fatima said so, everything was supposed to turn out all right!"

I went over, put an arm around the boy, and guided him to a low wall that separated the roof we were on from that of the building next door. "All right," I said. "It's all right, nothing more's going to

happen."

"But he could come back!" the boy protested.

"Who?"

"*Him*—Fatima's saint, the one that was supposed to take him away!"

Marcus and I glanced at each other quickly: *Him.* "Look," I said to the boy quietly, "suppose you start by telling me your name."

"Well," the boy sniffed, "downstairs they—"

"Just forget what they call you downstairs, for a minute." I rocked his shoulders a bit with my arm. "You just tell me what name you were born with."

The boy paused, his big eyes taking our measure warily. I must admit the situation was quite confusing for me, too; all I could think to do was pull out a handkerchief and begin wiping the paint from the boy's face.

It did the trick. "Joseph," the boy murmured.

"Well, Joseph," I said chummily. "My name's Moore. And this man is Detective Sergeant Isaacson. Now—suppose you come clean about this saint of yours."

"Oh, he wasn't mine," Joseph answered quickly. "He was Fatima's."

"You mean Ali ibn-Ghazi's?"

He nodded rapidly. "She—he—Fatima had been saying for I guess about two weeks that she'd found a saint. Not like a patron saint, in church, not like that—just a person who was kind, and was going to take her away from Scotch Ann to live with him."

"I see. I guess you knew Ali pretty well, then?"

Another nod. "He was my best friend in the club. All the girls liked her, of course, but we were special friends."

I had pretty well cleaned up Joseph's face, and he turned out to be quite a handsome, appealing young man. "It seems Ali got along with everyone," I remarked. "Customers, too, I guess."

"Where'd you hear *that*?" Joseph answered, his words coming faster

and faster. “Fatima hated working here. He always made it seem to Scotch Ann like he liked it, because he didn’t want to go back to his father. But he hated it, and when he was alone with a customer, well—he could get pretty angry. But some customers—” The boy turned away, very clearly perplexed.

“Go on, Joseph,” Marcus said. “It’s all right.”

“Well…” Joseph turned from one to the other of us. “Some customers, they *like* it when you don’t like it.” His eyes turned down to gaze at his feet. “Some even pay more for it. Scotch Ann always thought Fatima was pretending, to make more money. But she really did hate it.”

A sharp jab of both physical revulsion and deep sympathy hit me somewhere in the abdomen, and Marcus’s face betrayed a similar reaction; but we did have an answer to our earlier question.

“There it is,” Marcus whispered to me. “Hidden, but real—resentment and resistance.” He spoke aloud to Joseph: “Did any of the customers ever get mad at Fatima?”

“Once or twice,” the boy said. “But mostly, like I say, they liked it.”

There was a lull in the talk, and then the sound of an elevated train on Third Street jarred me back to business. “And this saint of his,” I said. “This is very important, Joseph—did you ever see him?”

“No, sir.”

“Did Fatima ever meet a man on the roof?” Marcus asked. “Or did you ever notice someone carrying a large bag of some kind?”

“No, sir,” Joseph said, a bit bewildered. Then he brightened, trying to please us: “The man came in more than once after Fatima met him, though. I do know that. But he told her never to say who he was.”

Marcus smiled just a bit. “A customer, then.”

“And you never guessed which one it was?” I asked.

“No, sir,” Joseph answered. “Fatima said that if I kept it all secret and was good, then maybe the man would take me away, too, someday.”

I put my arm back around his shoulders tightly, looking out over

the rooftops once more. “You must hope that doesn’t ever happen, Joseph.” I said, and then his brown eyes began to shed tears again.

The Golden Rule didn’t yield any more significant information that evening, nor did the other residents of the building or the block that we questioned. Before departing the scene, however, I felt I ought to ask the boy Joseph if he wanted to leave Scotch Ann’s employ—he seemed entirely too young for such business, even by disorderly house standards, and I thought there was a good chance that I could get Kreizler to take him on as a charity case at the Institute. But Joseph, orphaned since age three, had already had his fill of institutes, orphanages, and foster homes (not to mention alleyways and empty railroad cars), and nothing I said about Kreizler’s place being “different” had any effect on him. The Golden Rule had been the only home he’d ever known where he hadn’t been ill fed and beaten—repulsive as she might be, Scotch Ann had an interest in keeping her boys relatively healthy and scar-free. That fact counted for more with Joseph than anything I might say about the place’s evils and dangers. In addition, his suspicions about men who promised a better life somewhere else had only been heightened by the saga of Ali ibn-Ghazi and his “saint.”

Sad as it made me, Joseph’s decision was unappealable: in 1896 there was no way to go over the boy’s head and persuade a government agency (such as those created in recent years) to forcibly remove him from the Golden Rule. American society did not then generally recognize (as much of it still does not) that children might not be fully responsible for their own actions and decisions: childhood has never been viewed by most Americans as a separate and special stage of growth, fundamentally different from adulthood and subject to its own rules and laws. By and large children were and are seen as miniature adults, and according to the laws of 1896 if they wanted to abandon their lives to vice, that was their business—and their lookout. And so there seemed to be nothing for me to do but say goodbye to that frightened little ten-year-old, and wonder if he wouldn’t be the next boy to cross paths with the butcher who was haunting such disreputable houses as the Golden Rule; but then, just as I was leaving the place, an idea occurred to me, one that I thought might both help keep Joseph safe and advance our investigation.

“Joseph,” I said, kneeling down to speak to him in the entranceway to the club, “do you have many friends who work in other places like this?”

“Many?” he answered, putting a finger to his mouth pensively.

"Let's see—I guess I do know *some.* Why?"

"I want you to tell them what I'm going to tell you. The man who killed Fatima has killed other children who do this kind of work—mostly boys, though maybe not only boys. The main thing to remember is that for some reason that we don't understand yet they all come from houses like yours. So I want you to tell your friends that from now on they've got to be very, very careful about their customers."

Joseph reacted to this rather urgent statement by drawing back a bit and looking up and down the street fearfully. But he didn't run away. "Why only places like this?" he asked.

"Like I say, we don't know. But he'll probably be back, so tell everyone you know to keep their eyes open. Look for someone who gets angry when any of you are"—I strained for a word—"difficult."

"You mean uppity?" Joseph asked. "That's what Scotch Ann calls it—uppity."

"Right. He may have picked Fatima because of it. Don't ask me why, because I don't know. But watch for it. And, most important of all—don't go anywhere with anyone. Never leave the club, no matter how nice the man seems or how much money he offers you. The same goes for your friends. All right?"

"Well—okay, Mr. Moore," Joseph answered slowly. "But maybe—maybe you and Detective Sergeant Isaacson can come back and check on us, sometime. Those other cops, the ones that were here this morning, they didn't seem to care much. They just told everybody to keep quiet about Fatima."

"We'll try to do that," I answered, taking a pen and a piece of paper from my coat pocket. "And if you ever have anything you want to tell someone, anything at all that you think is important, you come straight to this address during the day, and to this one at night." I gave him not only our headquarters location but also the number of my grandmother's house on Washington Square, wondering for an instant what the old girl would make of this boy if he ever did show up. Then I had him write down the telephone number of the Golden Rule. "Don't go to any other cops—tell us everything first. And don't tell any other cops that we were here."

"Don't worry," the boy answered quickly. "You're the first two cops I ever met that I'd talk to, anyway."

“That’s probably because I’m not a cop,” I said with a smile.

The grin was returned, and with a start I realized that I was seeing someone else’s face echoed in Joseph’s features. “You didn’t seem like one,” the boy said. Then his brows knotted up with another question: “So why are you trying to find out who killed Fatima?”

I put a hand on the boy’s head. “Because we want to stop him.” Just then the harsh sound of Scotch Ann’s gravelly voice came bursting out of the Golden Rule’s front hall, and I nodded in its direction. “You’d better go. Remember what I said.”

At a quick, youthful pace Joseph disappeared back into the club, and I stood up to find Marcus smiling at me.

“You handled that pretty well,” he said. “Spent much time around kids?”

“Some,” I answered, without elaborating. I had no desire to reveal how much young Joseph’s eyes and smile had reminded me of my own dead brother’s at the same age.

As we walked back across town, Marcus and I discussed the new lay of things. Sure now that the man we sought was well acquainted with places like the Golden Rule and Paresis Hall, we tried to identify who other than customers would regularly investigate such haunts. The idea of a reporter or social essayist like Jake Riis—a man out to reveal the evils of the city and perhaps driven to mad extremities by overexposure to vice—occurred to us, but just as quickly we realized that no one had yet made much of a print crusade out of child prostitution, and certainly not out of homosexual child prostitution. That left us with missionaries and other church workers, a category that seemed more promising: remembering what Kreizler had said about the connection between religious manias and mass murder, I wondered if indeed we were dealing with someone determined to be the hand of a wrathful god on this earth. Kreizler had said he didn’t consider a religious motivation likely, but Kreizler could be wrong about that—after all, missionaries and church workers were known to travel frequently by rooftops when doing their tenement work. Marcus and I were ultimately led away from such a hypothesis, however, by what Joseph had told us. The man who had killed Ali ibn-Ghazi had come to the Golden Rule regularly, and his visits had gone unnoticed. Any reforming crusader worth his salt would have worked hard to be the center of attention.

“Whoever or whatever he is,” Marcus announced, as we closed back in on Number 808 Broadway, “we know one thing—that he *can* come and go unnoticed. He looks completely as if he belongs in those houses.”

“Right,” I said. “Which brings us back to customers, which means it could be almost anyone.”

“Your theory about an angry customer might still work. Even if he’s not a transient, he still might’ve been fleeced one too many times.”

“I’m not so sure. I’ve seen men who’ve been robbed by whores. They might beat the living daylights out of one of them, but the kind of mutilation we’ve seen? He’d *have* to be mad.”

“Then maybe we’re back to another one of the Ripper theories,” Marcus said. “Maybe his brain’s deteriorating from disease—a disease he picked up in a place like Ellison’s or the Golden Rule.”

“No,” I answered, flattening my hands out in front of me and trying to make it all clearer in my mind. “The one constant we’ve been able to hold on to is that he’s not crazy. We can’t question that now.”

Marcus paused, and then spoke carefully: “John—you’ve asked yourself, I suppose, what’ll happen if some of Kreizler’s basic assumptions are wrong?”

Taking a deep, weary breath I said, “I’ve asked myself.”

“And your answer?”

“If they’re wrong, then we’ll fail.”

“And you’re satisfied with that?”

We’d reached the southwest corner of Eleventh Street and Broadway, where trolley cars and carriages were lugging all manner of weekend revelers up- and downtown. Marcus’s question hung in the air over this scene for a moment, causing me to feel very detached from the normal rhythms of city life and very uneasy about the immediate future. What, indeed, would all this terrible learning we were doing amount to if our basic assumptions were wrong?

“It’s a dark road, Marcus,” I finally said quietly. “But it’s the only road we’ve got.”

CHAPTER 19

There were snow flurries that night, and Easter morning saw the city covered by a light white powder. At nine A.M. the thermometer still had not climbed above forty degrees (it would do so later that day, but just barely and only for a few minutes), and I really was tempted to stay at home and in bed. But Lucius Isaacson had important news for us all, or so he said in a telephone call; and so, with the bells of Grace Church clanging and scores of bonneted worshipers crowding around and through its doors, I trudged back into the headquarters that I'd left only half a dozen hours earlier.

Lucius had spent the previous evening interviewing Ali ibn-Ghazi's father, from whom he had learned almost nothing. The elder Ghazi had been determinedly reticent, especially after Lucius had shown him his badge. Initially, Lucius had thought his uncooperative behavior nothing more than the usual slum dweller's method of dealing with the police; but then Ghazi's landlord had told Lucius, as the latter left the building, that Ghazi had received a visit that afternoon from a small group of men—including two priests. His general description of them had matched that given by Mrs. Santorelli; but the landlord had further noticed that one of the priests wore the distinctive signet ring of the Episcopal Church. This meant that, however improbable it might have seemed, Catholics and Protestants were working together toward some end. The landlord was of no help in determining that end, for he was unable to say what the two priests had spoken to Ghazi about; but immediately after their departure Ghazi had settled a sizable back rent debt, in full and in large notes. Lucius would have given us this news the night before, but after leaving the Syrian ghetto he had made what he thought would be a brief stop at the morgue. Thinking to find out whether Ali's body had been inspected by a coroner, and, if it had, what official judgment had been passed on the

matter, Lucius had been kept waiting for nearly three hours. He'd finally been informed that Ali's body had already been removed for burial; and the only copy of the coroner's report, which the night officer at the morgue assured Lucius had been unusually brief, had been dispatched to Mayor Strong's office.

It was impossible to say precisely what the two priests, the coroner, the mayor, or anyone else involved in these activities was up to; but obfuscation and the suppression of facts seemed the very least of it. The feeling that we faced a greater challenge than simply catching our killer—a feeling that had taken seed after Giorgio Santorelli's murder—now began to grow and chafe at each of us.

Spurred on by that sinister irritant, our team assumed and maintained a quickened pace over the next week or so. Murder sites and disorderly houses were visited and revisited by the Isaacsons, who spent hours trying to discover new clues and days trying to coax new information out of anyone who might have seen or heard anything of importance. But they generally ran up against the same wall of interference that had silenced Ali ibn-Ghazi's father. Marcus, for example, was anxious to put the watchman from Castle Garden to a much more severe test than he'd been able to do on the night of Ali's death—but when he returned to the old fort he was told that the watchman had quit his job and departed from the city, leaving no indication as to his destination. It was safe to assume, we all agreed, that wherever the man had disappeared to, he had taken with him one of the impressive wads of money that the two unidentified priests were dispensing around town.

Kreizler, Sara, and I, meanwhile, pressed on with the job of fleshing out our imaginary man by using persons apprehended for similar crimes as points of reference. Sadly, there continued to be no shortage of these; if anything, their number only increased as the weather improved. At least one incident, bizarrely enough, was actually inspired by the weather: Kreizler and I investigated the case of one William Scarlet, who was apprehended in his home while attempting to kill his eight-year-old daughter with a hatchet. A police patrolman called to the scene had been Scarlet's next target, and the entire neighborhood of Thirty-second Street and Madison Avenue had been kept awake for hours by the assailant's crazed ravings. Both the daughter and the patrolman had escaped without serious injury, and when Scarlet was arrested his only explanation was that he'd been driven mad by a powerful thunderstorm that had swept through the city that night. Surprisingly enough, Kreizler could find very little to dispute this. Scarlet actually loved his daughter dearly, and in the past

had always shown the utmost respect for the law. Though Laszlo was inclined to view the proceedings as the result of some deeply buried twist in Scarlet's mental development, the possibility that the sound of loud thunder had driven him temporarily insane could not be decisively ruled out. Whatever the case, it was without doubt an example of passing violent paroxysm, and thus of little use to us.

On the very next day, Kreizler took Sara along to investigate the case of Nicolo Garolo, an immigrant living on Park Row, who had severely stabbed his sister-in-law and the woman's three-year-old daughter after the little girl allegedly claimed that Garolo was trying to "hurt" her. "Hurt" in this case clearly indicated sexual assault, to Laszlo, and the fact that all the participants were immigrants was also intriguing. The familial connection, however, ultimately limited the relevance of the crime to our work, although Garolo's sister-in-law did provide Sara with some interesting material for the construction of her imaginary women.

In addition to all this, there were the papers to go through, twice a day, in order to cull bits of useful information. This was a fairly indirect process, however, being as the New York papers had begun one by one to stop covering the boy-whore murders in the days following the Castle Garden affair. In addition, the citizens' group that was supposed to have been organizing for an information-gathering visit to City Hall never materialized. In short, the brief flicker of interest in the case that had been displayed outside the immigrant ghettos following the ibn-Ghazi murder had been very effectively snuffed out, leaving the daily papers with nothing to offer us but reports of other killings from around the country. These we patiently studied in an effort to gain more elements that could be used in the elaboration of theories.

It was not uplifting work; for while New York might have been America's leading center of violent crime, particularly of those varieties directed toward children, the rest of the United States was doing its part to keep national statistics high. There was, for example, the vagabond in Indiana (once interned in an asylum but recently released as sane) who killed the children of a woman who had hired him to do menial work; or the thirteen-year-old girl in Washington whose throat had been cut in Rock Creek Park for absolutely no reason that anyone could divine; and the reverend in Salt Lake City who murdered as many as seven girls and burned their remains in a furnace. We studied all these cases and many more—indeed, every day presented us with at least one incident or criminal to hold up against our developing portrait for comparison. Without doubt, most

of these examples involved behavior of a paroxysmal nature: either alcohol- or drug-induced rages, which would pass with the return of sobriety, or temporary brain malfunctions (such as certain rare types of epileptic seizure), which would go into remission on their own. Occasionally, however, there was a case involving careful premeditation, and when the assessments of the mental examiners in such instances were published, or when reports on the trials of the culprits appeared, they sometimes provided small grains of genuine insight.

Even Kreizler's servants were contributing to the quest for a solution, either through example or direct participation. I have already described my own speculations concerning Mary Palmer and the possible parallel between her case and ours. Those thoughts were duly weighed and their salient aspects recorded on the big chalkboard, although Mary herself was never consulted about them, as Laszlo continued to insist that she be told as little as possible about the case. Cyrus, on the other hand, had managed to get hold of much of the reading material that Kreizler had assigned to the rest of us, and he devoured it eagerly. He made no comments during meetings save when asked, but at those moments he often proved quite insightful. At one midnight conference, for instance, when we were speculating on the mental and physical condition of our murderer immediately after he'd committed his crimes, we suddenly came hard up against the fact that none of us had ever taken the life of another human being. We all knew, of course, that there was someone in the room who had, but none of us felt much like asking Cyrus for an experienced opinion—none of us, that is, except Kreizler, who had no trouble posing the question in simple, straightforward language. Cyrus answered in much the same way, confirming that after his act of violence he would have been capable of neither elaborate planning nor extensive physical exertion; but we were all surprised when he punctuated this statement with some interesting thoughts on Cesare Lombroso, the Italian sometimes supposed to be the father of modern criminology.

Lombroso had postulated the existence of a criminal "type" of human being (in essence a throwback to early, savage man), but Cyrus stated that he found such a theory implausible, given the wide range of motivations and behaviors he'd recently learned could be involved in criminal actions—including his own. Interestingly enough, Dr. H. H. Holmes, the mass murderer who was waiting to be hanged in Philadelphia, had stated during the course of his trial that he believed himself to be representative of Lombroso's criminal type. Mental, moral, and physical degeneracy had accounted for his actions, Holmes claimed, and so his legal responsibility should of course be considered

as diminished. The argument had gotten him nowhere in court; and after discussing his and other cases, we concluded that our killer's work could no more be ascribed to evolutionary retrogression than could Holmes's. In both subjects, the intellectual capacity demonstrated was simply too significant.

And then there was the day that young Stevie Taggert drove me down to meet the Isaacsons under the Brooklyn Bridge. Stevie had been continuing to run "errands" for me on a regular basis, and the process of keeping this activity hidden from Kreizler had forged something of a bond between us, one that permitted straightforward communication. At any rate, we received word one morning that two young girls playing under the Rose Street arch of the Brooklyn Bridge had come upon an abandoned wagon, the freight compartment of which contained a human skull, arm, and hand. Although the crime didn't resemble our killer's work in terms of style, the fact that the wagon had been left under a bridge recalled our man's penchant for water and the structures near it, so we thought it worthwhile to take a look. The body parts, however, proved to be those of an adult, as well as utterly unidentifiable. And, since Marcus found no fingerprints on the wagon that matched those of our murderer, he and Lucius released the gruesome discovery into the care of the city's chief coroner. In order to avoid questions, I departed in the calash before the men from the morgue arrived; and as we made our way back uptown, Stevie put a question to me:

"Mr. Moore, sir—about the man you're looking for. I heard Dr. Kreizler say the other day that none of the dead boys had been—well, you know, sir, 'assaulted.' Is that right?"

"Yes, that's been true so far, Stevie. Why?"

"It's just that it makes me wonder, sir. Does that mean he ain't a fag?"

I sat up at the frankness of the query—sometimes you had to work very hard to remember that Stevie was only twelve. "No, that doesn't mean that he's not a—a fag, Stevie. But the fact that his victims do the work they do doesn't mean that he *is* one, either."

"You figure maybe he just hates fags?"

"That may have something to do with it."

We fought our way through the traffic on Houston Street, Stevie struggling with his emerging line of reasoning and seemingly oblivious

to the whores, drug fiends, peddlers, and beggars that swarmed around us. “What I’m thinking, Mr. Moore, is that maybe he *is* a fag, and maybe he *hates* fags, too. Kinda like that guard who gimme such a hard time out on Randalls Island.”

“I’m afraid I don’t get you,” I said.

“Well, you know, in court, when I was up for cracking that guy’s skull, they tried to make me out for crazy, saying the guy had a wife and kids and all, so how could he be a fag? And in the Refuge House, if he caught two boys going at each other like that, brother, would he lay into ’em. But all the same, I wasn’t the first kid he tried it with. No, sir. So I figure maybe that’s why he had such a mean disposition—he never really knew, deep down, just what he was. Know what I mean, Mr. Moore?”

Remarkably enough, I did know what he meant. We’d had many long discussions at our headquarters concerning the sexual proclivities of our killer, and we would have many more before our work was done; yet Stevie had come close to crystallizing all our conclusions in that one statement.

There really wasn’t one of us whose brain wasn’t working overtime to come up with ideas and theories that would propel our investigation forward; but, as might be expected, no one was working harder than Kreizler. In fact, his exertions grew so continuous, and at times so excessive, that I began to worry about his physical and nervous health. After one twenty-four-hour period when he stayed at his desk with a stack of almanacs and a large sheet of paper bearing the four dates of the recent murders (January 1st, February 2nd, March 3rd, and April 3rd), trying to unlock the mystery of when our man chose to kill, Laszlo’s face became so pale and haggard that I ordered Cyrus to remove him to his home for some rest. I remembered Sara’s statement that Kreizler seemed to have some sort of personal stake in the work we were doing; and though I wanted to ask her for elaboration, I feared that such a conversation would only revive my tendency to speculate about their personal relationship, which was neither any of my business nor conducive to productive work on the case.

But a discussion became inevitable one morning, when Kreizler—fresh from a long night at his Institute, where there’d been trouble concerning a new student and her parents—set off without a break to do a mental competency assessment of a man who’d dismembered his wife on a homemade altar. Laszlo had lately been gathering evidence

to support the theory that our murders were being conducted as bizarre rituals, during which the killer—much like a Mohammedan whirling dervish—used extreme yet fairly formalized physical action to bring about psychic relief. Kreizler based this idea on several facts: the boys were all strangled before they were mutilated, thus giving the killer complete control over the scene as he played it out; furthermore, the mutilations followed an extremely consistent pattern, centering on the removal of the eyes; and finally, every killing had occurred near water, and on a structure whose function arose from that same water. Other murderers were known to have viewed their grim deeds as personal rites, and Kreizler believed that if he could talk to enough of them he'd begin to understand how to read any messages that might be contained in the mutilations themselves. Such work, however, was especially hard on the nerves, even for an experienced alienist like Kreizler; add to this his general state of overworked exhaustion, and you produced a formula for trouble.

On the morning in question, Sara and I—just coming into Number 808 Broadway as Kreizler went out—happened to be watching as Laszlo tried to enter his calash and very nearly fainted. He shook the spell off with ammonia salts and a laugh, but Cyrus told us that this time it had been two days since he'd had anything like real sleep.

"He'll kill himself if he doesn't slow down," Sara said, as the calash rolled off and we got into the elevator. "He's trying to make up for the lack of clues and facts with effort. As if he can force an answer to this thing."

"He's always been that way," I replied, shaking my head. "Even when we were boys, he was always *at* something, and always so deadly serious. It was somewhat amusing, in those days."

"Well, he's not a child now, and he ought to learn to take care of himself." That was Sara's tough side talking; it was a different tone that came through when she asked, with what seemed affected casualness and without looking at me, "Have there never been any women in his life, John?"

"There was his sister," I answered, knowing that it wasn't what she was driving at. "They used to be very close, but she's married now. To an Englishman, a baronet or some such."

With what I thought was effort, Sara remained dispassionate. "But no women—romantically, I mean?"

"Oh. Yes, well, there was Frances Blake. He met her at Harvard and for a couple of years it looked as though they might get married. I never saw it, myself—for my money she was something of a shrew. He seemed to find her charming, though."

Sara's most mischievous smile, that tiny curl of her upper lip, appeared. "Perhaps she reminded him of someone."

"She reminded *me* of a shrew. Look, Sara, what do you mean when you say Kreizler seems as though he's got some personal stake in this thing? Personal how?"

"I'm not quite sure, John," she answered, as we walked into our headquarters and found the Isaacsons engaged in a vehement squabble over some evidential details. "But I can say this—" Sara lowered her voice, indicating that she didn't wish to pursue the conversation in front of any of the others. "It's more than just his reputation, and more than just scientific curiosity. It's something old and deep. He's a very deep man, your friend Dr. Kreizler."

With that Sara drifted off to the kitchen to make herself some tea, and I was dragged into the Isaacsons' argument.

Thus did we pass most of April, with the weather warming up, small pieces of information slowly but steadily falling into place, and questions about each other opening wider without being openly addressed. There would be time to explore such matters later, I kept telling myself—for now the work was what mattered, the job at hand, on which depended who knew how many lives. Focus was the key—focus and preparation, readiness to meet whatever could be hatched from the mind of the man we sought. I took this attitude confidently, feeling, after viewing two of his victims, that I'd seen the worst he had to offer.

But an incident that occurred at the end of the month presented my teammates and me with a new kind of horror, one born not of blood but of words—one that, in its own way, was as terrible as anything we'd yet encountered.

CHAPTER 20

On a particularly pleasant Thursday evening, I was sitting at my desk reading a story in the *Times* about one Henry B. Bastian of Rock Island, Illinois, who several days earlier had killed three boys who worked on his farm, cut up their bodies, and fed the pieces to his hogs. (The citizens of the town had been unable to think of a cause for the dastardly crime; and when local law enforcement officers had closed in to arrest Bastian, he killed himself, thus eliminating any chance that the world would ever discover or study his motives.) Sara was putting in an increasingly rare appearance at Mulberry Street, and Marcus Isaacson was there, too. He frequently visited headquarters at off-hours, in order to rummage undisturbed through the anthropometry files: Marcus still held out hope that our killer might have a prior criminal record. Lucius and Kreizler, meanwhile, were wrapping up a long afternoon at the Ward's Island Lunatic Asylum, where they had been studying the phenomena of secondary personalities and brain hemisphere dysfunction, in order to determine if either pathology might characterize our killer.

Kreizler considered such possibilities remote, to say the very least, essentially because patients afflicted with dual consciousnesses (arising from either psychic or physical trauma) did not generally exhibit the capacity for extensive planning that our killer had shown. But Laszlo was determined to chase down even the most improbable theories. Then, too, he genuinely liked such outings with Lucius, which allowed him to trade bits of his unique medical knowledge for invaluable lessons in criminal science. Thus when Kreizler telephoned at about six o'clock to say that he and the detective sergeant had finished their research, I was not entirely surprised to hear more vigor in Laszlo's voice than had been the case in recent days; and I replied with equal energy when he suggested that we meet for a drink at

Brübacher's Wine Garden on Union Square, where we could compare notes on the day's activities.

I spent another half an hour on the evening papers, then wrote a note for Sara and Marcus, telling them to come along to Brübacher's and join us. After pinning the note to the front door, I snatched a walking stick out of the Marchese Carcano's elegant ceramic stand and headed out into the warm evening, as merrily, I'll wager, as any man who's spent the day immersed in blood, mutilation, and murder has ever done.

The mood on Broadway was a festive one, the stores being open late for Thursday evening shopping. It was not yet dusk, but McCreery's was apparently still on its winter lighting schedule: the windows were bright beacons, offering what seemed certain customer satisfaction to the passing throngs. Evening services had concluded at Grace Church, but there were still a few worshipers gathered outside, their light dress a testament to spring's long-awaited but irreversible arrival. With a rap of my stick against the pavement I turned north, ready to spend at least a few minutes back among the world of the living, and on my way to one of the best places to do so.

"Papa" Brübacher, a truly *gemütlich* restaurateur who was always glad to see a regular customer, had assembled one of the best wine and beer cellars in New York, and the terrace of his establishment, across the street from the east side of Union Square, was an ideal place from which to watch people stroll in the park as the sun descended beyond the western terminus of Fourteenth Street. Such, however, were not the principal reasons why sporting gentlemen like myself frequented the place. When streetcars had first made their appearance on Broadway, some unknown conductor had gotten it into his head that if the snakelike bends that the tracks made around Union Square weren't taken at full speed the car would lose its cable. The other conductors on the line had bought into this never-proven theory, and before long the stretch of Broadway along the park had been dubbed "Dead Man's Curve," because of the frequency with which unsuspecting pedestrians and carriage riders lost life or limb to the hurtling streetcars. Brübacher's terrace provided a commanding view of all this action; and throughout warm afternoons and evenings it was customary, when one of the engines of injury was heard or seen approaching, for bets to be laid among the wine garden's customers as to the likelihood of an accident occurring. These bets could, on occasion, be sizable, and the guilt that the winners felt when a collision did take place never managed to drive the game out of existence. Indeed, the frequency of accidents, and thus the volume of

gaming, had risen to such proportions that Brübacher's had earned the sobriquet "Monument House," and was now a required stop for any visitor to New York who aspired to the title of gamesman.

As I crossed Fourteenth Street to the small curbed island east of Union Square that was home to Henry K. Brown's splendid equestrian statue of General Washington, I began to hear the usual shouts —"Twenty bucks the old lady doesn't make it!"; "The guy's only got one leg, he doesn't have a prayer!"—emanating from Papa Brübacher's. The call of the game sped my steps, and when I arrived I jumped the ivy-laden iron railing that ringed the terrace and nestled in with a couple of old pals of mine. After ordering a liter of smooth, dark Würzburger that had a head as thick as whipped cream, I rose just long enough to embrace old Brübacher, then finally began to lay bets with a fury.

By the time Kreizler and Lucius Isaacson showed up, at just past seven, my friends and I had witnessed two near-misses on nannies with perambulators and one brush of a streetcar against a very expensive landau. An intense debate as to whether this latter contact constituted a collision ensued, one that I was just as glad to get away from by retreating to a relatively remote corner of the terrace with Lucius and Kreizler, who ordered a bottle of Didesheimer. The debate that I found *them* engaged in, however, steeped as it was in references to brain parts and functions, proved no more entertaining. The distant sound of an approaching streetcar at last signaled a new round of betting, and I had just wagered the full contents of my billfold on the agility of a fruit peddler when I looked up to find myself face-to-face with Marcus and Sara.

I was going to suggest that they get in on the action, as the fruit peddler's pushcart was particularly heavy-laden and the encounter looked to be an exciting even-money affair; but when I paused long enough to study their respective faces and attitudes—Marcus's wild-eyed and agitated, Sara's pallid and stunned—I realized that something extraordinary had occurred, and put my money away.

"What in hell's happened to you two?" I said, setting my beer stein on a table. "Sara, are you all right?"

She nodded rather weakly, and Marcus began to scan the terrace fervently, while fidgeting with his hands uncontrollably. "A telephone," he said. "John, where's a telephone?"

"Just inside the door, there. Tell Brübacher you're a friend of mine,

he'll let you—"

But Marcus was already shooting away from me into the restaurant, while Kreizler and Lucius, who had broken off their conversation, stood and watched in confusion.

"Detective Sergeant," Kreizler said, as Marcus passed. "Has there been some—"

"Excuse me, Doctor," Marcus said. "I've got to—Sara has something you ought to see." Marcus took two steps inside the open terrace doorway and grabbed the telephone, putting the little conical receiver to his ear and clicking the armrest rapidly. Brübacher looked on in surprise, but at a nod from me he let Marcus continue. "Operator? Hello, operator?" Marcus began to stamp his right foot hard. "Operator! I need to get a line through to Toronto. Yes, that's right, Canada."

"Canada?" Lucius echoed, his own eyes going wide. "Oh, God—Alexander Macleod! Then that means—" Lucius glanced at Sara, looking as if he suddenly understood what she'd been through, and then joined his brother at the 'phone. I guided Sara over to Kreizler's table, and then she very slowly drew an envelope out of her bag.

"This arrived at the Santorellis' flat yesterday," she said, in a dry, pained voice. "Mrs. Santorelli brought it to Police Headquarters this morning. She couldn't read it and was asking for help. No one would give her any, but she refused to go home. Eventually I found her sitting out by the front steps. I translated it. At least, I translated most of it." She shoved the note into Laszlo's hand and her head dropped lower. "She didn't want to keep it, and since there's nothing anyone at headquarters can do with it, Theodore asked me to bring it along and see what you make of it, Doctor."

Lucius came back over to join us, and he and I watched anxiously as Kreizler opened the envelope. When Laszlo had glanced over its contents he drew in breath quickly though quietly, and nodded his head. "So," he noised, in a voice that seemed to say he'd been expecting something like this. Then we all sat down, and without any introduction Kreizler read the following in a very quiet voice (I have preserved the author's original spelling in this transcription):

My dear Mrs. Santorelli,
I don't know as it is you what is the source of the vile LIES I

read in the newspapers, or if the police are behind it and the reporters are part of their scheme, but as I figger it might be you I take this occashun to straten you out:

In some parts of this world such as where dirty immigrants like yourself come from it is often found that human flesh is eaten regular, as other food is so scarce and people would starve without it. I have personally read this and know it to be true. Of course it is usuly children what is eaten as they are tenderest and best tasting, especially the ass of a small child.

Then these people that eat it come here to America and shit their little children shit all around, which is dirty, dirtier than a Red Injun.

On February 18 I seen your boy parading himself, with ashes and paint on his face. I decided to wait, and saw him several times before one night I took him away from THAT PLACE. Saucy boy, I already knew I must eat him. So we went straight to the bridge and I trussed him and did him quick. I collected his eyes and took his ass and it fed me for a week, roasted with onions and carrots.

But I never fucked him, though I could have and he would have liked me to. He died unsoiled by me, and the papers ought to say so.

"There is no closing and no signature," Kreizler finished, in a voice that was little more than a whisper. "Understandably." He sat back and stared at the note on the table.

"Good Christ," I breathed, falling a few steps back and then into a chair.

"It's him, all right," Lucius said, picking up the note and scanning it. "That business about the—the buttocks, that was never reported in any of the papers." He put the letter down and returned to Marcus, who was still bellowing the name Alexander Macleod into the telephone.

Staring blankly, Sara began to feel into the air behind her for a chair, at which Laszlo snatched one and slipped it under her. "I couldn't translate the entire thing for the poor woman," Sara said, her voice still almost inaudible. "But I did give her the gist of it."

"You did well, Sara," Kreizler said reassuringly, crouching by her, and being careful that he wasn't overheard by anyone else on the

terrace. “If the killer is aware of her, it’s best that she be aware of him, and of what he’s thinking. But she hardly needs the details.” Returning to his chair, Laszlo tapped one finger on the note. “Well, it appears that opportunity has placed a treasure trove into our hands. I suggest we make use of it.”

“Make *use* of it?” I said, still in some shock. “Laszlo, how can you—”

Laszlo ignored me, and turned to Lucius. “Detective Sergeant? May I ask who your brother is attempting to contact?”

“Alexander Macleod,” Lucius answered. “The best handwriting man in North America. Marcus studied with him.”

“Excellent,” Kreizler said. “The ideal place to begin. From such an analysis we can proceed into a more generalized discussion.”

“Wait a minute.” I stood up, trying both to keep my voice down and to prevent all the horror and revulsion I felt at the note from rushing out; nevertheless, I was somewhat astounded by their attitude. “We have just found out that this—this *person* not only killed that boy but *ate* him, or at least part of him. Now what exactly do you expect to find out from some goddamned handwriting expert?”

Sara looked up, forcing herself to get a grip on it all. “No. No, they’re right, John. I know it’s horrible, but give yourself a minute to think.”

“Indeed, Moore,” Kreizler added. “The nightmare may have deepened for us, but imagine how much more it has done so for the man we seek. This note shows that his desperation has reached a new height. He may, in fact, be entering a terminal phase of self-destructive emotions—”

“What? Excuse me, Kreizler, but *what*?” My heart was continuing to beat fast, and my voice trembled as I strained to keep it at a whisper. “You’re still going to insist that he’s sane, that he wants us to catch him? He’s *eating* his victims, for God’s sake!”

“We don’t know that,” Marcus said, quietly but firmly, as he leaned out the terrace doorway and covered the telephone’s mouthpiece with two fingers.

“Precisely,” Kreizler declared, standing and coming round to me as Marcus began to talk into the ’phone again. “He may or may not be eating parts of his victims, John. What he most certainly is doing is

telling us that he is eating them, knowing that such a statement can only shock us and cause us to work all the harder to find him. That is a sane action. Remember all we've learned: if he were mad he'd kill, cook the flesh, eat it, and God knows what else, without ever telling anyone—at least, not anyone he knew would go directly to the authorities with the information." Kreizler gripped my arms hard. "Just think what he's given us—not only handwriting but information, a vast amount of information to be interpreted!"

Just then Marcus yelled "Alexander!" again, but with more satisfaction this time. He smiled as he went on. "Yes, it's Marcus Isaacson, in New York. I have a rather urgent matter, and I just need to clear up one or two details…" At that Marcus lowered his voice and leaned into a corner by the doorway, his brother staying with him and straining to listen.

Marcus's telephone conversation lasted another fifteen minutes. In the meantime the note sat on the table, as gruesome and unapproachable in its own way as had been the dead bodies that the killer had left lying all over Manhattan. Indeed, in one respect it was even more frightening: for the killer, despite the ghoulish reality of his work, had thus far been little more than an imaginary patchwork of traits so far as we were concerned. But to hear his particular and bona fide voice changed everything at a shot. No longer could he be *anyone* out there—*he* was *him,* the only person whose mind could plan these acts, the only person capable of speaking these words. Looking around at the shouting bettors on the terrace and then out at the passersby on the street, I suddenly felt that I'd be much more likely now to know him if I met him. It was a new and haunting sensation, one that I had difficulty absorbing; yet even as I grappled with it, I could already sense that Kreizler was right. Whatever terrible and troubling thoughts dominated the murderer, this note could not be dismissed as a series of mad ravings—it was undeniably coherent, though just how coherent I was only on the verge of learning.

As soon as Marcus returned from the 'phone he picked up the letter, sat at the table, and studied the thing intensely for some five minutes. Then he began to make affirmative little humming noises, at which we all drew around him expectantly. Kreizler produced a notepad and a pen, ready to write down anything of value. The calls of the bettors continued to burst out every few minutes, and I shouted over to ask them to keep it down. It was a request that, ordinarily, would have produced howls of outrage and derision; but my voice must have betrayed some of the urgency of the moment, for my friends did comply. Then, in the dwindling light of that beautifully balmy spring

evening, Marcus began to expound, quickly but clearly.

"There are two general areas involved in the study of handwriting," he said, his voice dry with excitement. "First, there's document examination, in the traditional legal sense—meaning strictly scientific analysis with a view toward comparison and establishing authorship; and second, a group of techniques that are more—well, *speculative*. This second group isn't considered scientific, by most people, and it doesn't carry much weight in court. But we've found it very useful in several investigations." Marcus glanced at Lucius, who nodded without speaking. "So—let's start with the basics."

Marcus paused long enough to order a tall glass of Pilsener to keep his throat from drying up, then continued:

"The man—and the attack of the pen in this case is undoubtedly masculine—who wrote this note had at least several years of schooling that entailed penmanship. This schooling occurred in the United States, no more recently than fifteen years ago." I could not help a befuddled look, to which Marcus explained, "There are clear signs that he was trained, hard and regularly, in the Palmer system of penmanship. Now, the Palmer system was introduced in 1880, and was quickly taken up by schools all over the country. It remained what you might call dominant until just last year, when it began to be replaced in the East and in some big western cities by the Zaner-Blosser method. Assuming that our killer's primary education ended at no later than age fifteen, he can't now be any older than thirty-one."

It seemed a sound line of reasoning; and with small scratching sounds, Kreizler put these points on his pad, to be transferred later to the big chalkboard at Number 808 Broadway.

"All right, then," Marcus went on. "If we assume that our man's about thirty now, and that he finished school at fifteen or younger, then he's had another fifteen years to evolve both his writing and his personality. It doesn't look like that's been a particularly pleasant time. To begin with, and as we've already guessed, he's an inveterate liar and schemer—he actually knows his grammar and his spelling, but he's gone pretty far out of his way to try to make us think that he doesn't. See, up here, at the top of the note, he's written 'straten,' along with 'figger' and 'occashun.' He's had the idea that maybe he can get us to believe that he's ignorant, but he's slipped up—at the bottom, he writes that after he snatched Giorgio he took him 'straight to the bridge,' and he has no trouble spelling it."

"One can only assume," Kreizler mused, "that by the end of the letter he's concerned with making his point, rather than with playing games."

"Exactly, Doctor," Marcus said. "So his writing is extremely natural. The fact that the misspellings are intentional is also indicated by his script—the false passages are much more hesitating and less certain. The *t*'s in particular lack the hard, slashing definition that they have in the rest of the writing. His grammar reveals the same point: in some spots he tries to mimic the talk of an uneducated farmhand—'I *seen* your boy,' and whatnot—but then he can let off a sentence like, 'He died unsoiled by me, and the papers ought to say so.' It's completely inconsistent—but, assuming he checked back over the thing after writing it, he failed to spot the inconsistency. That indicates that, while he's unquestionably a capable planner, he may have an exaggerated opinion of his own cleverness."

After another sip of Pilsener Marcus lit a cigarette and continued, his words finally starting to emerge at a relaxed pace: "Up to this point, we're on pretty solid ground. All this is good science, and would stand up in a court of law. Age about thirty, several years of decent schooling, a deliberate attempt at deception—no judge would reject it. Now, however, things become less clear-cut. Are any traits of character betrayed by the script itself? A lot of handwriting analysts believe that all people, not just criminals, reveal their basic attitudes during the physical act of writing, regardless of what words are actually written. Macleod's done a lot of work in this area, and I think it may be useful to apply his principles here."

A sudden shout of "Jesus Christ, I never seen a fat man move like that in my *life*!" came from across the terrace, and I was about to make another request for quiet when I saw my friends already attending to the job. Marcus was then free to proceed:

"First of all, the slashing downstrokes and the extreme angularity of a lot of the characters suggest a man who's pretty tormented—he's under enormous inner tension of some kind, and it can't find any vent other than anger. In fact, the thrusting, snapping motion of the hand—you see it, here?—is so pronounced that a tendency toward physical violence, and maybe even sadism, is pretty safe to assume. But it gets more complicated than that, because there are other, contrasting elements. In the high register, what's called the 'upper zone' of the writing, you can see these florid little wanderings of the pen. They usually indicate a writer with imagination. In the lower zones, on the other hand, there's a fair amount of confusion—it's most apparent in

the tendency to place the loops of letters like *g* and *f* on the wrong side of the stem. It doesn't happen every time, but the fact that it keeps happening is important, given that he's been trained in penmanship and is at all other times very deliberate and very calculating."

"Excellent," Kreizler judged; yet I noticed his pen wasn't moving. "But I wonder, Detective Sergeant, if these last elements could not have been divined from the contents of the note, as well as from your initial and somewhat more scientific analysis of the handwriting?"

Marcus smiled and nodded. "Probably. And that shows why the so-called art of reading personality into handwriting hasn't been accepted as a science yet. But I thought it'd be useful to include the observations, because they at least show no marked inconsistency between the content and the script of the note. If it were a fake, you'd almost certainly find that kind of a gap." Kreizler accepted the statement with a nod, though he still didn't write any of it down. "Well, that about does it for the handwriting," Marcus concluded, as he pulled out his vial of carbon powder. "I'm just going to dust the edges of the paper itself for fingerprints and make sure we get a match."

As he did so, Lucius, who'd been scrutinizing the envelope, spoke up: "There's nothing particularly revealing about the postmark. The thing was sent from the Old Post Office by City Hall, but our man probably traveled to get there. He's careful enough to expect that the postmark will be examined. But we can't rule out the possibility that he lives in the City Hall area."

Marcus had pulled a set of photographed prints from his pocket, and was holding them against the now smudged letter.

"Um-hmm," he noised. "A match." And as he said it the unrealistic but flickering hope that the note was a forgery was snuffed out.

"Which leaves us," Kreizler said, "with the considerable task of interpreting the contents." He pulled out his watch and checked the time—nearly nine. "It might be better if our minds were fresh, but…"

"Yes," Sara said, her balance finally restored, *"but."*

We all knew what the "but" was—our killer wasn't factoring rest periods for his pursuers into his schedule. With that pressing thought in mind, we got up to depart for Number 808 Broadway, where coffee would be brewed. Whatever engagements any of us had been foolish

enough to make for later in the evening were implicitly canceled.

As we left the terrace, Laszlo touched my arm, indicating that he wanted a private word. “I had hoped that I was wrong, John,” he said, as the others went ahead. “And I still may be, but—I’ve suspected from the beginning that our man has been observing our efforts. If I’m right he probably followed Mrs. Santorelli to Mulberry Street and kept careful track of whom she spoke to. Sara says she translated the note for the unfortunate woman near the front steps of the building—the killer, if he was there, could not have missed their discussion. He may have followed Sara here; he may be watching us right now.” I spun to look at Union Square and the blocks around us, but Kreizler pulled me back in a jerk. “Don’t—he won’t be visible, and I don’t want any of the others to suspect this. Especially Sara. It may affect their work. But you and I should heighten all precautions.”

“But—*watching* us? Why?”

“Vanity, perhaps,” Laszlo answered. “Desperation, as well.”

I was dumbfounded. “You say you’ve suspected all along?”

Kreizler nodded as we began to follow the others. “Since we found that bloodstained rag in the calash on the very first day. The torn page that was wrapped up in it was—”

“Was an article of yours,” I said quickly. “Or so I guessed.”

“Yes,” Laszlo answered. “The killer must have been observing the bridge anchor at the time I was called to the scene. I suspect that the page was his way of *acknowledging* me, somehow. And mocking me, too.”

“But how can you be sure it was definitely the killer who left it?” I asked, looking for a way to avoid the harrowing conclusion that we had been, at least intermittently, under the scrutiny of a murderer.

“The rag,” Kreizler explained. “Though bloodied and soiled, the material bore a striking resemblance to that of the Santorelli boy’s chemise—which, if you recall, was missing a sleeve.”

Ahead of us, Sara had begun to look over her shoulder inquisitively, prompting Laszlo to pick up his pace. “Remember, Moore,” he said. “Not a word to the rest of them.”

Kreizler rushed up to Sara, leaving me to steal one more very

nervous glance at the dark expanse of Union Square Park across Fourth Avenue.

The stakes, as they say, were rising.

CHAPTER 21

First of all," Kreizler announced, as we came into our headquarters that night and began to settle ourselves at our desks, "I think we can finally dispense with one lingering uncertainty." At the top right-hand corner of the chalkboard, under the ASPECTS OF THE CRIMES heading, sat the word ALONE, with a question mark after it—a question mark that Laszlo now removed. We were already relatively certain that our killer had no accomplices: no pair or team of confederates, we'd reasoned, could have engaged in such behavior for a period of years without some one of them revealing it. During the initial phase of the investigation the only catch to this theory had been the question of how one man on his own could have negotiated the walls and rooftops of the various disorderly houses and murder sites; Marcus, however, had taken care of that problem. Thus, while the use of the pronoun "I" in the letter was not conclusive in and of itself, it seemed, when taken in conjunction with these other facts, definitive evidence that a solitary man was at work.

We all nodded assent to this reasoning, and Kreizler went on: "Now, then—to the salutation. Why '*My dear* Mrs. Santorelli'?"

"Could be habit of form," Marcus answered. "It would be consistent with his schooling."

"'*My* dear'?" Sara queried. "Wouldn't schoolchildren learn just 'dear'?"

"Sara's right," said Lucius. "It's overly affectionate and informal. He knows his letter is going to devastate the woman, and he's enjoying it. He's playing with her, sadistically."

"Agreed," Kreizler said, underlining the word SADISM, which was

already written on the right-hand side of the board.

"And I'd like to point out, Doctor," Lucius added with conviction, "that this further demonstrates the nature of his hunting." (Lucius had lately become firmly convinced that our killer's apparent anatomical knowledge arose from his being an accomplished hunter, because of the stalking nature of many of his activities.) "We've already dealt with the blood-lust aspect—but the toying confirms something else, something beyond even blood-crazed hunting. It's a sporting mentality."

Laszlo weighed it. "Your argument is sound, Detective Sergeant," he said, writing SPORTSMAN so that it bridged the CHILDHOOD and INTERVAL areas. "But I'll need a bit more convincing"—he chalked on a question mark after the word—"given the prerequisite and its implications."

The prerequisite for the killer's being a sportsman, put simply, was a certain amount of leisure time in his youth, when he could have engaged in hunting not only for survival, but for pleasure, as well. This, in turn, implied either that he had an upper-class urban background (the upper being the only real leisure class in the city in those days before child labor laws, when even middle-class parents tended to work their offspring long hours), or that he had been brought up in a rural area. Each assumption would have narrowed our search significantly, and Laszlo needed to be completely certain of our reasoning before he would accept either of them.

"As for his opening statement," Kreizler went on. "Aside from the pronounced emphasis on 'lies'—"

"That word has been retraced several times," Marcus cut in. "There's a lot of feeling behind it."

"Then lies are not a new phenomenon for him," Sara extrapolated. "You get the feeling he's all too familiar with dishonesty and hypocrisy."

"And yet is still outraged by them," Kreizler said. "Any theories?"

"It ties in with the boys," I offered. "In the first place, they're dressed up as girls—a kind of deceit. Also, they're whores, and they're supposed to be compliant—but we know that the ones he killed could be troublesome."

"Good," Kreizler said with a nod. "So he doesn't like misrepresentation. Yet he's a liar himself—we need an explanation for

that."

"He's learned," Sara said simply. "He's been exposed to dishonesty, surrounded by it perhaps, and he does hate it—but he's picked it up as a method of getting by."

"And you only do that kind of learning once," I added. "It's the same thing as the violence: he saw it, he didn't like it, but he learned it. The law of habit and interest, just like Professor James says—our minds work on the basis of self-interest, the survival of the organism, and our habitual ways of pursuing that interest become defined when we're children and adolescents."

Lucius had grabbed volume one of James's *Principles* and leafed to a page: "'The character has set like plaster,'" he quoted, holding a finger up, "'never to soften again.'"

"Even if…?" Kreizler asked, drawing him out.

"Even if," Lucius answered quickly, flipping a page and scanning it with his finger, "those habits become counterproductive in adulthood. Here: 'Habit dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted, and it is too late to begin again.'"

"A spirited reading, Detective Sergeant," Kreizler observed, "but we need examples. We have postulated an original violent experience or experiences, perhaps sexual in nature"—Laszlo indicated a small blank square in the CHILDHOOD section of the board that was boxed off and subheaded THE MOLDING VIOLENCE AND/OR MOLESTATION—"which we suspect form the basis of his understanding and practice of such behavior. But what of the very strong emotions centered on dishonesty? Can we do the same?"

I shrugged. "Obviously, he might himself have been accused of it. Unjustly, in all likelihood. Perhaps frequently."

"Sound," Kreizler answered, chalking the word DISHONESTY, and then beneath it, BRANDED A LIAR, on the left-hand side of the board.

"And then there's the family situation," Sara added. "There's a lot of lying that goes on in a family. Adultery is probably the first thing we think of, but—"

"But it doesn't tie in to the violence," Kreizler finished. "And I

suspect that it must. Could the dishonesty apply *to* the violence—to violent incidents that were deliberately concealed and remained unacknowledged both inside and outside the family?"

"Certainly," Lucius said. "And it would be all the worse if the *image* of the family was something very different."

Kreizler smiled with real satisfaction. "Precisely. Then if we have an outwardly respectable father who at the very least beats his wife and children…"

Lucius's face screwed up a bit. "I didn't necessarily mean a father. It could have been anyone in the family."

Laszlo waved him off. "The father would be the greatest betrayal."

"Not the mother?" Sara said carefully. And there was more in the question than just the subject at hand: at that moment it seemed that she was trying to read Laszlo as much as the killer.

"There's no literature to suggest it," Kreizler answered. "The recent findings of Breuer and Freud on hysteria point to prepubertal sexual abuse by the *father* in nearly every case."

"With all due respect, Dr. Kreizler," Sara protested, "Breuer and Freud seem fairly confused about the meaning of their findings. Freud began by assuming sexual abuse as the basis for all hysteria, but recently he seems to have altered that view, and decided that *fantasies* concerning abuse may be the actual cause."

"Indeed," Kreizler acknowledged. "There is much that remains unclear in their work. I myself cannot accept the single-minded emphasis on sex—to the exclusion even of violence. But look at it from an empirical standpoint, Sara—how many households have you known that were ruled by dominating, violent mothers?"

Sara shrugged. "There is more than one kind of violence, Doctor—but I shall have more to say about that when we reach the end of the letter."

Kreizler had already written VIOLENT BUT OUTWARDLY RESPECTABLE FATHER on the left-hand side of the board, and seemed ready, even anxious, to move on. "This entire first paragraph," he said, slapping at the note. "Despite its deliberate misspellings, it has a consistent tone."

"You get that immediately," Marcus answered. "He's already

decided in his mind that there are a lot of people after him."

"I think I know what you're driving at, Doctor," Lucius said, again rifling through the stack of books and papers on his desk. "One of the articles you gave us to read, the one you translated yourself…ah!" He yanked one set of papers free. "Here—Dr. Krafft-Ebing. He discusses 'intellectual monomania,' as well as what the Germans call *'primäre Verrücktheit,'* and argues for replacing both terms with the word 'paranoia.'"

Kreizler nodded as he wrote the word PARANOID on the INTERVAL section of the board: "Feelings, perhaps even delusions, of persecution that have taken root after some traumatic emotional experience or set of experiences, but which do not result in dementia—Krafft-Ebing's admirably succinct definition, and it does seem to fit. I very much doubt that our man is in a deluded state as yet, but his behavior is probably quite antisocial, nevertheless. Which does not mean that we seek a misanthrope—that would be too simple."

"Couldn't the murders themselves satisfy the antisocial drive?" Sara asked. "Leaving him, the rest of the time, outwardly normal and—well, participatory, functional?"

"Perhaps even *overly* functional," Kreizler agreed. "This will not be a man who, in the opinion of his neighbors, could slaughter children and claim to have eaten them." Kreizler jotted these ideas down and then faced us again. "And so—we arrive at the second and even more extraordinary paragraph."

"One thing it tells us right away," Marcus pronounced. "He hasn't traveled much abroad. I don't know what he's been reading, but widespread cannibalism hasn't been seen in Europe lately. They'll eat just about anything else, but not each other. Although you can never be quite sure about the Germans…" Marcus caught himself and glanced at Kreizler. "Oh. No offense intended, Doctor," he said.

Lucius clapped a hand to his forehead, but Kreizler only smiled wryly. The Isaacsons' idiosyncrasies no longer perplexed him in any way. "No offense taken, Detective Sergeant—you can, indeed, never be certain about the Germans. But if we accept that his travel has been limited to the United States, what are we to make of your theory that his mountaineering skills indicate a European heritage?"

Marcus shrugged. "First-generation American. The parents were immigrants."

Sara drew a quick breath. "'Dirty immigrants'!"

Kreizler's face filled with gratification again. "Indeed," he said, writing IMMIGRANT PARENTS on the left side of the chalkboard. "The phrase resounds with loathing, doesn't it? It's the kind of hatred that generally has a specific root, obscure though it may be. In this case, he probably had a troubled relationship with one or both parents early on, and eventually grew to despise everything about them—including their heritage."

"Yet it's his own heritage, too," I said. "That might account for some of the savagery toward the children. It's self-loathing, as if he's trying to clean the dirt out of himself."

"An interesting phrase, John," Kreizler answered. "And one we shall return to. But there is one more practical question to be answered here. Given the hunting and the mountaineering, and now the supposition that he has not been abroad, can we say anything about the geographical background?"

"Same thing as before," Lucius replied. "Either a rich city family, or the countryside."

"Detective Sergeant?" Laszlo said to Marcus. "Would any one region be better than another for this training?"

Marcus shook his head. "You could learn it anywhere that had appreciable rock formations—which means a lot of places in the United States."

"Hmmm," Laszlo agreed, with some disappointment. "Not much help there. Let's let it lie for now and go back to that second paragraph. The language itself would seem to support your theory concerning the 'upper-zone flourishes' of the handwriting, Marcus. This is indeed an imaginative tale."

"That's a hell of an imagination," I said.

"True, John," Kreizler answered. "Without doubt, excessive and morbid."

Lucius snapped his fingers at that. "Wait," he said, again going for his books. "I'm remembering something—"

"Sorry, Lucius," Sara called, with one of her curling little smiles. "I've beaten you to it." She held up an open medical journal. "This fits

in with the dishonesty discussion, Doctor," she went on. "In his article 'A Schedule for the Study of Mental Abnormalities in Children,' Dr. Meyer lists some of the warning signs for predicting future dangerous behavior—excessive imagination is one of them." She read from the article, which had appeared in the *Handbook of the Illinois Society for Child-Study* in February of 1895: "'Normally children can reproduce voluntarily all sorts of mental pictures in the dark. This becomes abnormal when the mental pictures become an obsession, i.e., cannot be suppressed. Especially pictures that create fear and unpleasant feelings are apt to become excessively strong.'" Sara emphasized the final sentence of the quotation: "'Excessive imagination may lead to the construction of lies and the irresistible impulse to play them on others.'"

"Thank you, Sara," Kreizler said. MORBID IMAGINATION then went up on both the CHILDHOOD and ASPECTS sections of the chalkboard, which puzzled me. To my request for an explanation Laszlo replied, "He may be writing this letter in his adulthood, John, but so distinctive an imagination does not spring to life in maturity. It's been with him always—and Meyer is borne out here, incidentally, for this child did indeed become dangerous."

Marcus was tapping a pencil into one hand thoughtfully. "Any chance this cannibalism business was a childhood nightmare? He says he's read it. Any chance he read it *then*? The effect would have been greater."

"Ask yourself a more basic question," Laszlo answered. "What is the strongest force behind imagination? Normal imagination, but also and particularly the morbid?"

Sara had no trouble with that: "Fear."

"Fear of what you see," Laszlo pressed, "or of what you hear?"

"Both," Sara answered. "But mostly what you hear—'nothing is as terrible in reality,' et cetera."

"Isn't reading a form of hearing?" Marcus asked.

"Yes, but even well-to-do children don't learn to read until many years into childhood," Kreizler answered. "I offer this only as a theory, but suppose the cannibalism story was then what it is now—a tale designed to terrify. Only now, rather than the terrorized party, our man is the terrorizer. As we've constructed him thus far, wouldn't he find that immensely satisfying, even amusing?"

“But who told it to him?” Lucius asked.

Kreizler shrugged. “Who generally terrifies children with stories?”

“Adults who want them to behave,” I answered quickly. “My father had a story about the Japanese emperor’s torture chamber that had me up for nights, picturing every detail—”

“Excellent, Moore! My very point.”

“But what about—” Lucius’s words became a bit halting. “What about the—I’m sorry, but I’m afraid I still don’t know how to discuss certain things with a lady present.”

“Then pretend one isn’t,” Sara said, a bit impatiently.

“Well,” Lucius went on, no more comfortably, “what about the focus on the—buttocks?”

“Ah, yes,” Kreizler answered. “Part of the original story, do we think? Or a twist of our man’s invention?”

“Uhhh—” I droned, having thought of something but, like Lucius, unsure of how to phrase it in front of a woman. “The, uh—the—references, not only to dirt, but to—fecal matter—”

“The word he uses is *‘shit,’* ” Sara said bluntly, and everyone in the room, including Kreizler, seemed to spring a few inches off the floor for a second or two. “Honestly, gentlemen,” Sara commented with some disdain. “If I’d known you were all so modest I’d have stuck to secretarial work.”

“Who’s modest?” I demanded—not one of my stronger retorts.

Sara frowned at me. “*You,* John Schuyler Moore. I happen to know that you have, on occasion, paid members of the female sex to spend intimate moments with you—I suppose *they* were strangers to that kind of language?”

“No,” I protested, aware that my face was a bright red beacon. “But they weren’t—weren’t—”

“Weren’t?” Sara asked sternly.

“Weren’t—well, ladies!”

At that Sara stood up, put one hand to a hip, and with the other

produced her derringer from some nether region of her dress. “I would like to warn you all right now,” she said tightly, “that the next man who uses the word ‘lady,’ in that context and in my presence, will be *shitting* from a new and artificially manufactured hole in his gut.” She put the gun away and sat back down.

The room was as quiet as the grave for half a minute, and then Kreizler spoke softly: “I believe you were discussing the references to shit, Moore?”

I gave Sara a rather injured and indignant glance—which she thoroughly ignored, the wretch—and then resumed my thought: “They seem connected—all the scatological references and the preoccupation with that part of the anato—” I could feel Sara’s eyes burning a hole in the side of my head. “And the preoccupation with the *ass,*” I finished, as defiantly as I could manage.

“Indeed they do,” Kreizler said. “Connected metaphorically as well as anatomically. It’s puzzling—and there’s not a great deal of literature on such subjects. Meyer has speculated on the possible causes and implications of nocturnal urinary incontinence, and anyone who works with children finds the occasional subject who is abnormally fixated on feces. Most alienists and psychologists, however, consider this a form of mysophobia—the morbid fear of dirt and contamination, which our man certainly seems to have.” Kreizler chalked the word MYSOPHOBIA up in the center of the board, but then stood away from it, looking dissatisfied. “There seems, however, more to it than just that…”

“Doctor,” Sara said, “I’ve got to urge you again to broaden your concepts of the mother and father in this case. I know your experience with children past a certain age is as extensive as anyone’s, but have you ever been closely involved with the care of an infant?”

“Only as a physician,” Kreizler answered. “And then rarely. Why, Sara?”

“It’s not a time of childhood that men figure greatly in, as a rule. Do any of you know men who have played a large part in raising children younger than, say, three or four?” We all shook our heads. I suspect that even if one of us *had* known such a man he would have denied it, just to keep the derringer out of sight. Sara turned back to Laszlo. “And when you find children with an abnormal fixation on defecation, Doctor, what form does it generally take?”

“Either an excessive urge or morbid reluctance. Generally.”

“Urge or reluctance to what?”

“To go to the toilet.”

“And how have they learned to go to the toilet?” Sara asked, keeping right after Kreizler.

“They’ve been taught.”

“By men, generally?”

Kreizler had to pause, at that. The line of questioning had seemed obscure at first, but now we could all see where Sara was going: if our killer’s rather obsessive concern with feces, buttocks, and the more generalized “dirt” (no subjects were, after all, mentioned more in the note) had been implanted in childhood, it was likely that contact with a woman or women—mother, nurse, governess, or what have you—had been involved in the process.

“I see,” Kreizler finally said. “I take it, then, that you have yourself observed the process, Sara?”

“Occasionally,” she replied. “And I’ve heard stories. A girl does. It’s always assumed that you’ll need the knowledge. The whole affair can be surprisingly difficult—embarrassing, frustrating, sometimes even violent. I wouldn’t bring it up, except that the references are so insistent. Doesn’t it suggest something out of the ordinary?”

Laszlo cocked his head. “Perhaps. I’m afraid I can’t consider such observations conclusive, however.”

“Won’t you at least consider the possibility that a woman—perhaps the mother, though not necessarily—has played a darker role than you’ve yet allowed?”

“I hope that I am not deaf to *any* possibilities,” Kreizler said, turning to the board but writing nothing. “However, I fear we have strayed too far into the realm of the barely plausible.”

Sara sat back, again disappointed at the result of her attempts to make Kreizler see another dimension in the imaginary tale of our killer. And I must confess, I was somewhat confused myself; after all, it had been Kreizler who had asked Sara to come up with such theories, knowing that none of us could. To dismiss her thoughts in

such a manner seemed arbitrary at best, especially when those thoughts sounded (to the semitrained ear, at any rate) as well reasoned as his own hypotheses.

"The resentment of immigrants is repeated in the third paragraph," Kreizler said, plowing on. "And then there is the reference to a 'Red Injun.' Other than another attempt to make us think him an ignoramus, what do we make of it?"

"The whole phrase seems important," Lucius answered. "'Dirtier than a Red Injun.' He was looking for a superlative, and that's what he came up with."

Marcus pondered the question: "If we assume that the immigrant resentment is family-based, then he himself isn't an Indian. But he must've had some kind of contact with them."

"Why?" Kreizler asked. "Race hatred doesn't require familiarity."

"No, but the two usually do accompany each other," Marcus insisted. "And look at the phrase itself—it's fairly casual, as if he naturally associates filth with Indians and assumes everyone else does, too."

I nodded, seeing his point. "That'd be out west. You don't usually hear that kind of talk in the East—it's not that we're more enlightened, by any means, but too few people share the point of reference. What I mean is, if he'd said 'dirtier than a nigger,' you might guess the South, right?"

"Or Mulberry Street," Lucius suggested quietly.

"True," I acknowledged. "I'm not saying the attitude's confined. After all, this could just be somebody who's read too many Wild West stories—"

"Or someone with excessive imagination," Sara added.

"But," I went on, "it might work as a general indication."

"Well, it's the obvious implication," Kreizler sighed, piquing me a bit. "But someone somewhere said that we must never overlook the obvious. What about it, Marcus—does the idea of a frontier upbringing appeal?"

Marcus thought it over. "It has attractions. First of all, it explains

the knife, which is a frontier weapon. It also gives us the hunting, recreational and otherwise, without the need for a wealthy background. And while there's plenty of terrain for mountaineering in the west, it's concentrated in specific areas, which might help. There are whole communities of German and Swiss immigrants out there, too."

"Then we shall mark it as a favored possibility," Kreizler said, doing so on the board, "though we can go no farther for the time being. That takes us to the next paragraph, at which point our man finally gets down to specifics." Kreizler picked up the note again, and then began to rub the back of his neck slowly. "On February eighteenth he spots the Santorelli boy. Having spent more time than I'd care to admit going over calendars and almanacs, I can tell you right away that February eighteenth was Ash Wednesday this year."

"He mentions ashes on the face," Lucius added. "That would mean that the boy went to church."

"The Santorellis are Catholic," Marcus added. "There aren't many churches near Paresis Hall, Catholic or otherwise, but we could try checking a broader area. It's possible someone will remember seeing Giorgio. He would have been fairly distinctive, especially in a church setting."

"And it's always possible that the killer got his first glimpse of him near the church," I said. "Or even in it. If we get lucky, someone may have witnessed the meeting."

"You two seem to have planned your weekend quite thoroughly," Kreizler answered, at which Marcus and I, realizing that we'd proposed long days of footwork, frowned at each other. "Although," Laszlo went on, "the use of the word 'parading' makes me doubt that they met very near a house of worship—particularly one in which Giorgio had just attended services."

"It does suggest that the boy was hawking his wares," I said.

"It suggests many things." Laszlo thought for a moment, sounding the word: "'Parading…' It might fit with your idea that the man suffers from a disability or deformity of some kind, Moore. There's a trace of envy in the word, as if he himself is excluded from such behavior."

"I don't quite see that," Sara answered. "It sounds more—disdainful, to me. That could simply be due to Giorgio's occupation, of course,

but I don't think so. There's no pity or sympathy in the tone, only harshness. And a certain sense of familiarity, as with the lying."

"Right," I said. "It's that lecturing tone you'd get from a schoolmaster who knows just what you're up to because he was a boy once himself."

"Then you're saying he disdains an open display of sexual behavior, not because he was prevented from engaging in such activities himself, but precisely because he *did* engage in them?" Laszlo cocked his head and puzzled with the notion. "Perhaps. But wouldn't the adults in his life have stifled such antics? And doesn't that lead us back to the idea of envy, even if there's no physical deformity?"

"But the issue must still have caused a scene, at least once," Sara volleyed, "in order for such restrictions to have been laid down."

Laszlo paused and then nodded. "Yes. Yes, you have a point, Sara." That brought a small but satisfied smile to her face. "And then," Kreizler continued, "whether he defied or submitted to the ban, the seed of future difficulty would have been planted. Good." Kreizler made a few quick scribbles to this effect on the left-hand side of the board. "On, then, to the ashes and paint."

"He puts the two together very easily," Lucius said, "whereas, to the average observer, there'd appear to be some inconsistency—I'll bet the priest at the service thought so."

"It's as if the one isn't any better than the other," Marcus added. "The tone remains pretty deprecating."

"And that presents a problem." Kreizler went to his desk and fetched a bound calendar, one that bore a cross on its cover. "On February eighteenth he saw Giorgio Santorelli for the first time, and I very much doubt that the encounter was accidental. The specificity suggests that he was out looking for just that type of boy on that day in particular. We have to assume, therefore, that the fact of its being Ash Wednesday is significant. In addition, the ashes, in tandem with the paint, seem to have heightened his reaction, which was essentially one of anger. That might suggest that he resented a boy-whore's presuming to participate in a Christian rite—yet as the detective sergeants have noted, there is no sense of reverence for that rite in his language. Quite the contrary. I have not, to this point, believed that we are dealing with a man who suffers from a religious mania. The evangelical and messianic qualities that tend to mark such pathologies

are not displayed, even in this note. And though my conviction in this regard has, admittedly, been a bit weakened by the schedule of the killings, the indications remain contradictory." Kreizler studied the calendar hard. "If there were only some significance to the day Giorgio was killed…"

We knew what he was referring to. Laszlo's recent investigation of the timings of the murders had revealed that all save one could be tied to the Christian calendar: January 1st marked the circumcision of Jesus and the Feast of Fools; February 2nd was the Purification of the Virgin Mary, or Candlemas Day; and Ali ibn-Ghazi had died on Good Friday. There had been holy days when no murders had taken place, of course—Epiphany, for instance, had passed without incident, as had the Five Wounds of Christ on February 20th. But if March 3rd, the date of the Santorelli killing, had possessed a Christian connotation, we could have been relatively certain that some kind of religious element was involved in our man's timing. No such connotation existed, however.

"Then maybe we're back to the theory of the lunar cycle," Marcus said, bringing up a very old bit of folk wisdom that we'd spent a fair amount of time debating, which ran to the effect that behavior such as our killer's was somehow connected to the waxing and waning of the moon, making it true "lunacy."

"I still don't like it," Kreizler said with a wave of his hand, eyes ever on his calendar.

"The moon *has* been linked to other physical and behavioral shifts," Sara said. "You'll find a lot of women, for instance, who believe it controls the menstrual cycle."

"And our man's urges do seem to run according to a cycle of some kind," Lucius agreed.

"So they do," Kreizler replied. "But the suggestion of such an unprovable astrological influence on psychobiology draws us away from the ritualistic nature of the murders. The claimed cannibalism is a new and apparently distinct element of those rituals, I'll admit. But the savagery has been consistently rising, and it was almost predictable that we should reach some such crescendo—although the absence of that particular feature in the ibn-Ghazi murder suggests he may have ventured into an area that, whatever his shocking statements in the note, was not truly to his liking."

The conversation ground to a halt for a moment, and as it did an idea began to form in my mind. “Kreizler,” I said, carefully weighing my words, “let’s assume for a moment that we’re right about all this. You’ve said yourself that it seems to further reinforce the notion that there’s a religious element to the murders.”

Kreizler turned to me, weariness starting to show in his eyes. “It can be taken that way,” he said.

“Well, what about our two priests, then? We’ve already figured that their behavior could easily be seen as an attempt to protect someone. Suppose it’s one of their own?”

“Ahh,” Lucius said quietly. “You’re thinking of someone like that reverend in Salt Lake City, John?”

“Exactly,” I answered. “A holy man gone very wrong. One with a second, and secret, life. Suppose his superiors have gotten wind of what he’s doing, but they can’t locate him for some reason—maybe he’s gone into hiding. The potential for scandal would be enormous. And given the role that the Catholic and Episcopal churches play in the life of this city, the leaders of either group could easily get not only the mayor’s office but the richest men in town to help them conceal it. Until they can deal with it privately, I mean.” I sat back, rather proud of this bit of work, but waiting for Kreizler’s reaction. His continued silence didn’t seem a good sign; so I added, a bit uncomfortably, “It’s just a thought.”

“It’s a damned good thought,” Marcus judged, with an enthusiastic knock of his pencil against his desk.

“It might tie a lot of things together,” Sara agreed.

Kreizler finally began to react: a slow nod. “It might, indeed,” he said, as he scrawled INCOGNITO PRIEST? in the center of the board. “The traits of background and character that we have described could fit a man of the cloth as well as any other—and the fact of his being a priest offers an attractive alternative to a religious mania. These could be personal conflicts playing out according to a schedule that happens to be natural, even convenient, for him. A more vigorous investigation of those other two priests will doubtless shed further light on the subject.” Kreizler turned. “And that—”

“I know, I know,” I said, holding up a hand. “The detective sergeants and myself.”

"How splendid to be correctly anticipated," Kreizler answered with a chuckle.

As Marcus and I briefly discussed our growing investigative chores for the next few days, Lucius glanced over the note again. "The next line," he announced, "seems to get back to the notion of sadism. He decides to wait, and to see the boy several times before the murder—again, he's toying with him, while all the time he knows what he's going to do. It's the sporting, sadistic hunter."

"Yes, I fear there's nothing new in that sentence—not until we reach the end." Kreizler tapped his chalk on the board. "'That place'—the only expression, other than 'lies,' which receives the upper case."

"Hatred again," Sara said. "Of Paresis Hall specifically, or of the general type of behavior practiced there?"

"Maybe both," Marcus said. "After all, Paresis Hall caters to a very specific clientele—men who want boys who dress up like women."

Kreizler kept tapping at the box marked THE MOLDING VIOLENCE AND/OR MOLESTATION. "We have returned to the core of the matter. This is not a man who hates all children, nor a man who hates all homosexuals—nor, for that matter, a man who hates all boy-whores who dress up like women. This is a man of very particular tastes."

"But you still do consider him homosexual, don't you, Doctor?" Sara asked.

"Only in the sense that the London Ripper could be called heterosexual," Kreizler answered, "because his victims happened to be women. The issue is almost irrelevant—this note proves as much. He may be homosexual, and he may be a pedophile, but sadism is the predominant perversion, and violence seems far more characteristic of his intimate contacts than do sexual or amorous feelings. He may not even be able to distinguish between violence and sex. Certainly, any sense of arousal seems to translate quickly into violence. And that, I am sure, is a pattern that was established during these initial molding experiences. The antagonists in those episodes were without question male—that fact comes into play far more than any true homosexual orientation, when he's selecting his victims."

"Was it a man that committed those early acts, then?" Lucius asked. "Or maybe another boy?"

Kreizler shrugged. "A difficult question. But we know this—certain

boys inspire in the killer a rage so deep he's constructed his entire existence around its expression. Which boys? As Moore has pointed out, those who are—either in the killer's eyes or in fact—deceitful, as well as insolent."

Sara indicated the note with a nod of her head. "'Saucy.'"

"Yes," Kreizler answered. "We have been correct in that assumption. We have further postulated that he chooses violence as a form for expressing that rage because he learned to do so in some sort of domestic setting, quite probably from a violent father whose actions went unacknowledged and unpunished. What was the cause of that original violence, insofar as our killer understood it? We have speculated on that, too."

"Wait," Sara said, in a moment of realization. She looked up at Kreizler. "We've come full circle, haven't we, Doctor?"

"We have indeed," Kreizler replied, drawing a line from one side of the chalkboard to the other: from the killer's traits to those of his victims. "Whether our man, in his youth, was a liar, sexually precocious, or generally so ill behaved that he required terrorizing in addition to beatings, he was in some fundamental way *very much like the boys he is now killing.*"

That, as they say, was a thought. If, by committing these murders, our killer was not only trying to destroy intolerable elements of the world around him, but also and more fundamentally parts of himself that he simply could not abide, then Kreizler might well be right about his entering a new and markedly more self-destructive phase; indeed, eventual self-destruction seemed, in this light, almost a certainty. But why, I asked Kreizler, should the man see those aspects of himself as so intolerable? And, if he did, why not simply change them?

"You said it yourself, Moore," Laszlo replied. "We only do that sort of learning once. Or, to paraphrase our former teacher, this killer makes the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which he is fitted, and it is too late for him to begin again. In the remainder of this fourth paragraph he describes abducting the boy, using a highly imperative tone. Does he mention desire? No—he tells us that he 'must.' He must because those are the laws by which his world, disagreeable as it may be, has always functioned. He has become what Professor James calls a 'mere walking bundle of habits,' and to abandon those habits would, he fears, mean abandoning

himself. You remember what we once said about Giorgio Santorelli—that he came to associate his psychic survival with the activities that caused his father to beat him? Our man is not so very different. He no doubt enjoys his murders as much or as little as Giorgio enjoyed his work. But for both of them those activities were, and are, vital, despite the deep self-loathing they may create—and which you have already detected in this note, Moore."

Now, I'll confess that I hadn't been fully aware of just how many incisive statements I'd made that evening; but I was now having no trouble keeping up with Laszlo's elaboration of them. "He gets back to that toward the end of the letter," I said. "The remark about Giorgio being 'unsoiled' by him—the filth he despises is actually in him, a part of him."

"And would be transmitted through the act of sex," Marcus added. "So you're right, Doctor—sex is not something he values or enjoys. It's the violence that's his goal."

"Isn't it possible that he isn't even capable of sex?" Sara asked. "Given the kind of background we're supposing, that is. In one of the treatises you gave us, Doctor, there's a discussion of sexual stimulation and anxiety reactions—"

"Dr. Peyer, at the University of Zurich," Kreizler said. "The observations grew out of his larger study of *coitus interruptus*."

"That's right," Sara continued. "The implications seemed strongest for men who had emerged from difficult home lives. Persistent anxiety could result in a pronounced suppression of the libido, creating impotence."

"Our boy's pretty tender on that subject," Marcus said, going to the note and reading from it. "'I never fucked him, though I could have.'"

"Indeed," Kreizler said, writing IMPOTENCE in the center of the board without hesitation. "The effect would only be to magnify his frustration and rage, producing ever more carnage. And that carnage emerges now as our most difficult puzzle. If these multilations are indeed personal rituals, unconnected to any definite religious theme other than dates, then regardless of whether he's a priest or a plumber it becomes all the more important to understand the details, for they will be specific to him." Kreizler went over to the note. "This document, I fear, gives us very little help along such lines." Laszlo rubbed his eyes as he checked his silver watch. "And it's quite late. I

suggest we conclude."

"Before we do that, Doctor," Sara said, quietly but firmly, "I'd like to get back to one point concerning the adults in this man's past."

Kreizler nodded, with little or no enthusiasm. "The woman involved," he sighed.

"Yes." Sara stood up and walked to the chalkboard, pointing to its various divisions. "We've theorized that we have a man who, while still a child, was harassed, embarrassed, blamed, and finally beaten. I can't contest the theory that the beatings were administered by a male hand. But the intimate nature of so many of the other aspects seems to me to suggest very strongly a woman's rather sinister presence. Listen to his tone throughout the note, which, after all, is addressed to *Mrs.* Santorelli *specifically*—it's defensive, badgered, even whining at moments, and obsessed with scatological and anatomical detail. It's the voice of a boy who's been scrutinized and humiliated regularly, who's been made to feel that he himself is filth, without ever experiencing a place or person of refuge. If his character truly did form in his childhood, Dr. Kreizler, then I must repeat that the mother would be the far more likely culprit, in this regard."

Kreizler's face betrayed irritation. "If that were so, Sara, then wouldn't massive resentment have been bred? And wouldn't the victims be women, like the Ripper's?"

"I don't argue your reasoning with regard to the victims," Sara answered. "I'm asking for a deeper look in another direction."

"You seem to think," Laszlo replied, a bit snappishly, "that I suffer from blinkered vision. I remind you that I do have *some* experience with these things."

Sara studied him for a moment, and then quietly asked, "Why do you resist so strongly the notion of a woman's active involvement in the formation?"

Laszlo suddenly rose, slammed a hand down on his desk, and shouted, "Because her role cannot have *been* active, damn it!"

Marcus, Lucius, and I froze for a moment, then exchanged uneasy glances. The rather shocking outburst, quite apart from being unwarranted, didn't even seem to make sense, given Laszlo's professional opinions. And yet it went on: "Had a woman been *actively* involved in this man's life, at any point, we would not even be here—

the crimes would never have *happened*!" Kreizler tried to regain an even keel, but only half-succeeded. "The whole notion is absurd, there is *nothing* in the literature to suggest it! And so I really must insist, Sara—we shall presume a record of feminine passivity in the formation and proceed to the issue of the mutilations! *Tomorrow!*"

As has hopefully become clear by now, Sara Howard was not the kind of woman to take such talk from any man, even one she admired and perhaps (in my opinion, at any rate) had still deeper feelings for. Her eyes went very thin at this last shot from Laszlo, and her voice was ice itself when she said:

"Since you appear to have decided this issue long ago, Doctor, it seems pointless to have asked me to research the subject." I was a little worried that she'd go for the derringer, but she opted for her coat instead. "Perhaps you thought it would be an amusing way to keep me occupied," she stormed on. "But I'll tell you right now that I don't need to be amused, cajoled, or otherwise mollycoddled—by any of you!"

And with that she was out the door. The Isaacsons and I traded more perturbed looks, but there was no need to say anything. We all knew that Sara had been right and Kreizler inexplicably, pigheadedly wrong. As Laszlo sighed and collapsed into his chair, it seemed for an instant that he might realize as much himself; but he did nothing more than ask us all to leave, claiming weariness. Then he fixed his eyes on the letter before him. The rest of us fetched our things and filed out, saying goodnight to Kreizler but receiving no reply.

Had the incident sparked no repercussions, I would hardly mention it here. True, it was the first real moment of discord we'd experienced at Number 808 Broadway, but it was inevitable that there should be a few, and no doubt we all would have gotten over it soon. But this sharp exchange between Kreizler and Sara did have repercussions: illuminating repercussions that not only revealed much that was unknown, even to me, about Kreizler's past, but also lit our way toward a face-to-face encounter with one of the most disturbing criminals in the recent history of the United States.

CHAPTER 22

We saw very little of Kreizler during the next week or so, and I later learned that he spent nearly all of that time in the city's jails and a variety of residential neighborhoods, interviewing men who'd been arrested for domestic violence as well as the wives and children who'd suffered at their hands. He came into our headquarters only once or twice, saying next to nothing but collecting notes and data with great, almost desperate determination. He never managed to apologize to Sara; but, even though the few words that passed between them were awkward and stilted, she did find it in herself to forgive his harsh statements, which she attributed to a combination of Kreizler's increasingly emotional involvement in the case and the nervousness that we'd all begun to feel with the changing of the month. Whatever calendar our killer was using, if he followed his established pattern he would strike again soon. At the time, anticipation of that event did seem a more than adequate explanation for Kreizler's uncharacteristic behavior; but such anticipation, it turned out, was only part of what was driving my friend so hard.

For our part, Marcus and I decided during those first few days of May to divide the tasks we'd outlined on the night the killer's note arrived. Marcus canvassed every Catholic church on the Lower East Side (as well as some outside that neighborhood) in an attempt to find anyone who might have noticed Giorgio Santorelli, while I took on the job of learning more about the two priests. After a weekend spent trying to get new details out of the man who owned the building where Ali ibn-Ghazi's father lived, however, as well as from Mrs. Santorelli and her fellow tenants (Sara once again did the interpreting), it became clear that more money had been spread around to ensure more people's silence. I was therefore forced to shift my activities to the two church organizations involved. We figured

that my status as a reporter for the *Times* would gain me the easiest and quickest access, in this regard, and I decided to start my inquiries at the top: with visits to the Roman Catholic archbishop of New York, Michael Corrigan, as well as the Episcopal bishop of New York, Henry Codman Potter. Both men lived in very pleasant town houses in the fifties near Madison Avenue, and I figured I could cover both interviews in one day.

Potter came first. Although New York's Episcopals only numbered in the tens of thousands in those days, some of those tens of thousands were among the wealthiest of the city's families; and the parish reflected that fact in its luxuriously appointed churches and chapels, its extensive real estate holdings, and its heavy involvement in city affairs. Bishop Potter—often referred to as New York's "first citizen"—personally preferred the quaint villages and churches of his upstate parishes to the bustle, noise, and dirt of New York; but he knew where the Church made its money, and he did his part to expand the flock in the city. All of which is to say that Potter was a man with big things on his mind; and although I waited in his very luxurious sitting room for longer than it would've taken him to say mass, when he finally did appear he found that he could spare me only some ten minutes of his time.

I asked if he was aware that a man dressed as a priest and wearing a signet ring that bore the large red and smaller white crosses of the Episcopal Church had been going around to people who had information concerning the recent child murders and paying them large sums of money to keep quiet. If the question shocked Potter, he didn't show it: cool as a cucumber he told me that the man was undoubtedly an impostor or a lunatic or both—the Episcopal Church had no interest in interfering with any police business, certainly not a murder case. Then I inquired as to whether a signet ring like the one that had been spotted would be a particularly easy item to get hold of. He shrugged and sat back comfortably, the flesh of his neck falling down over his stiff white and black collar, and said that he had no idea how easy it would be to lay hands on such a thing. He supposed any capable jeweler could manufacture one. Obviously, I wasn't going to get anywhere with the man; but just for the hell of it I decided to ask if he was aware of Paul Kelly's partially realized threat to stir up trouble among the immigrant communities over the issue of the murders. Potter said he was barely aware of Mr. Kelly at all, much less of any threats he might have made; being as the Episcopal Church had very few members among what Potter called the "recently arrived citizens of the city," little attention would have been paid to such matters by either himself or his subordinates. Potter concluded by

suggesting that I visit Archbishop Corrigan, who had much more contact with such groups and neighborhoods. I told him that Corrigan's residence was my next stop, and was on my way.

I'll admit that I'd been in a suspicious mood even before I encountered Potter; but his very *un*-churchmanlike lack of interest only made me more so. Where was any sense of concern for the victims of the crimes? Where was the pledge that if there was anything he could do, I had only to ask? Where was the head-shaking wish that the fiendish murderer be captured, and the fervent pressing of the flesh on that wish?

All these, I soon learned, were at Archbishop Corrigan's residence, behind the almost-completed magnificence of the new St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue between Fiftieth and Fifty-first streets. The new St. Pat's was unarguable evidence that the architect James Renwick had only been warming up when he'd designed our downtown neighbor, Grace Church. The enormous spires, archways, stained glass windows, and brass doors of St. Patrick's were on a scale, and had been executed with a speed, unheard-of even in New York. And, in good Catholic tradition, all the considerable work had been paid for not by the kind of crass business ventures that lined the coffers of the Episcopal Church, but by subscriptions from the faithful —including wave after wave of Irish, Italian, and other Catholic immigrants, whose numbers were rapidly swelling the power of a religion which, in the first days of the republic, had been frowned on by nearly all the populace.

Archbishop Corrigan was far more animated and engaging than Potter had been; a man who lives by subscriptions, I reasoned as I met him, has little choice but to be. He took me on a short tour of the cathedral, and outlined all the work that was still to be done: the Stations of the Cross needed to be installed, the Ladies' Chapel was as yet unbuilt, the chimes had to be paid for, and the spires required crowning. I began to think that he was going to ask me for a contribution; but I soon discovered that all this was just a buildup to a visit to the Catholic Orphan Society, where I was to be shown that the Church had another side. The Society was located across Fifty-first Street, in a four-story building with a pleasant front yard and plenty of well-behaved children wandering about. Corrigan took me there, he said, because he wanted me to understand the depth of the Church's commitment to lost and abandoned children in New York; they were avowedly just as important to him as the great cathedral in whose shadow the Orphan Society stood.

All of which was fine—except that I suddenly realized I hadn't *asked* him anything yet. This very pleasant, welcoming, deep-feeling fellow *knew* why I was there, a fact that became especially apparent after I started putting the same questions I'd asked Potter to him. Corrigan answered as if he'd been carefully rehearsed: Oh, yes, it was a terrible shame about those murdered boys; horrible; he couldn't imagine why anyone purporting to be a Catholic priest would be interfering (though he didn't seem very shocked by the suggestion); certainly, he would make inquiries, but he could assure me…On and on. I finally spared him any further effort by pleading a pressing engagement downtown, then caught a hansom on Fifth Avenue and headed in that direction.

I was now sure that in recent days I hadn't developed what Dr. Krafft-Ebing called "paranoia": we were faced with some sort of a conspiracy, a deliberate effort to conceal the facts of these murders. And what reason could these distinguished gentlemen have for such an effort, I thought with mounting excitement, other than to protect themselves from scandal—the kind of scandal that would have arisen if the murderer were revealed to be one of their own?

Marcus agreed with my reasoning; and over the next couple of days we began playing devil's advocate in an effort to find flaws in the theory of a renegade priest. Nothing we could come up with, however, ruled out the core hypothesis. Perhaps it was unlikely, for example, that a priest would be an accomplished mountaineer, but it was not impossible; and as for his remark about a "Red Injun," that could have grown out of missionary experience in the West. The hunting skills might have presented a problem, insofar as Lucius had already postulated that the man had spent a *lifetime* hunting—but our imagined priest could easily have developed the expertise in childhood. Priests, after all, are not born such. They have parents, families, and pasts like everyone else. And *that,* finally, meant that all of Kreizler's psychological speculations could be made to fit Marcus's and my picture as well as any other.

During the rest of the week Marcus and I looked for more details to support our work. A priest who possessed the kind of intimate knowledge of rooftops that our killer displayed would almost certainly be associated with mission work, we reasoned, and we therefore investigated those Catholic and Episcopal agencies that dealt with the poor. Much resistance was encountered, during this pursuit, and little hard information was gleaned. But our enthusiasm was not dampened; in fact, by Friday we were feeling so confident about our theory that we decided to explain it to Sara and Lucius. They expressed some

appreciation for our efforts, but also insisted on highlighting little inconsistencies that Marcus and I had played down. What about the theory of a military background, Lucius asked, which accounted for our man's ability to plot violence carefully and execute it coolly when danger was all around? Where would a priest have developed such a capacity? Perhaps, we answered, he had served as a chaplain in some part of the Army of the West. That would give us not only the military experience, but the Indian and frontier connections, as well. Lucius replied that he was not aware that chaplains were trained for combat; and anyway, Sara added, if our man had served many years on the frontier, and we already knew he was no older than thirty-one, then when had he found the time to become so intimately familiar with New York City? In childhood, we answered. If that were true, Sara continued, then we would have to accept that he did indeed come from a wealthy family, in order to explain his mountaineering and sporting expertise. All right, we said—so he was wealthy. Then there was the fact that Catholics and Protestants were working together: Wouldn't either group, Sara asked, be just as happy if the other had a murderous priest on its hands? We couldn't answer that one with anything more effective than a claim that Sara and Lucius were merely jealous of our work. They got a bit incensed at that, declaring that they were only following procedure by peppering us with objections and inconsistencies, and just to make sure we got the point, they went right on doing so.

Kreizler appeared at about five o'clock, but did not participate in the debate; instead, he pulled me rather urgently aside and told me that I was to accompany him immediately to the Grand Central Depot. The fact that I hadn't had much contact with Laszlo for a number of days hadn't kept me from worrying about him, and this sudden, secretive announcement that we were going to board a train didn't ease my mind. I asked him if I needed to pack a bag, but he said no, that we were only taking a brief ride on the Hudson River Line for the purpose of conducting an interview at an institution that was not far upstate. He'd decided to schedule the meeting for the evening, he said, because most of the institution's senior staff would be gone, and we could come and go fairly unnoticed. That was all the detail he was prepared to provide, a fact that struck me at the time as very mysterious; knowing what I do now, however, it makes perfect sense, for had he told me exactly where we were bound and who we were scheduled to meet, I almost certainly would have refused to go.

It's less than an hour by train from the middle of Manhattan to the small town on the Hudson River named by an early Dutch trader for the Chinese city of Tsing-sing; but for visitors and prisoners alike, the

trip to Sing Sing is usually divorced from real time, seeming at once the shortest and longest journey imaginable. Situated hard by the water and offering a commanding view of the Tappan Zee bluffs opposite, Sing Sing Prison (originally known as "Mount Pleasant") was opened in 1827 amid claims that it embodied the most advanced ideas in penology. And indeed, in those days when prisons were, in effect, small factories where inmates manufactured everything from combs to furniture to cut stone, prisoners did seem in many ways better-off (or at least better occupied) than they were seventy years later. True, they were beaten and tormented mercilessly in those early decades of the century, but so had they always been, and so are they still; and work, most will tell you, was preferable to "penitence," a largely idle state in which there is little to do save brood over the acts that have brought one to such a terrible place—that and plan schemes of revenge against those responsible. But prison manufacture died with the advent of organized labor, which would not tolerate wages being driven down by cheap convict workers; and for this reason more than any other, Sing Sing had degenerated, by 1896, into a horribly pointless place, where prisoners still wore their striped costumes, still obeyed the rule of silence, and still marched in lockstep, even though the jobs they'd once marched to had all but vanished.

Forbidding as the prospect of a visit to such a brutal, hopeless place was, it was overshadowed by the real apprehension I experienced when Kreizler finally told me whom we were going to see.

"I was a fool not to think of it myself," Laszlo said, as our train clacked along next to the Hudson, giving us a lovely view of sunset beyond the lush, bulging hills to the west. "Of course, it's been twenty years. But it never seemed likely, at that time, that I'd forget the fellow. I should have made the connection as soon as I saw the bodies."

"Laszlo," I said sternly, though I was pleased that he was finally becoming talkative. "Perhaps, now that you've impressed me into this miserable service, you'd care to dispense with all the mystery. Who are we going to see?"

"And I'm even more surprised that you didn't think of it, Moore," he answered, obviously a bit pleased with my discomfort. "After all, he was always one of your favorite characters."

"*Who* was?"

The black eyes fixed themselves unwaveringly on mine. "Jesse

Pomeroy."

At the mention of the name we both sat in silent apprehension, as if it alone might bring horror and mayhem into our near-empty train car; and when we spoke again, to review the case, it was in hushed tones. For while there'd been murderers more prolific than Jesse Pomeroy in our lifetimes, none was ever quite so unsettling. In 1872, Pomeroy had enticed a series of small children to remote spots near the small suburban village where he lived, then stripped and bound them and tortured them with knives and whips. He'd eventually been caught and locked up; but his behavior during incarceration was so exemplary that when his mother—long since abandoned by her husband—made an emotional appeal for parole just sixteen months after Jesse's sentence began, it was granted. Almost immediately after the release a new and even more horrifying crime occurred near the Pomeroy home: a four-year-old boy was found dead on a beach, his throat cut and the rest of his body terribly mutilated. Jesse was suspected, but evidence was lacking; several weeks later, however, the body of a missing ten-year-old girl was discovered in the basement of the Pomeroy house. The girl had also been tortured and mutilated. Jesse was arrested, and in the weeks that followed, every unsolved case in the vicinity that involved a missing child was reopened. None of them was ever tied directly to Pomeroy, but the case against him for the murder of the little girl was solid. Jesse's lawyers quite understandably decided to plead insanity for their client. The attempt, however, was doomed from the start. Pomeroy was originally condemned to hang, but the sentence was commuted to life in solitary confinement because of the villain's age:

Jesse Pomeroy, you see, had been but twelve years old at the start of his terrible career; and when he was shut away forever in a lonely prison cell—one that he still inhabits as I write these words—he was only fourteen.

Kreizler had crossed paths with what the press took to calling "the boy-fiend" soon after Pomeroy's lawyers entered the plea of not guilty by reason of insanity in the summer of 1874. At the time, such pleas were judged, as they are today, according to the "M'Naghten Rule," named after an unfortunate Englishman who, in 1843, fell under the delusion that Prime Minister Robert Peel wanted to kill him. M'Naghten had tried to circumvent this fate by himself killing Peel; and though he failed to achieve that object, he did manage to murder the prime minister's secretary. He was subsequently acquitted, however, when his lawyers successfully argued that he did not understand the nature or wrongness of his act. In such manner were

the floodgates of insanity opened onto the courtrooms of the world; and thirty years later, Jesse Pomeroy's defenders hired a battery of mental experts to assess their client and, hopefully, pronounce him as mad as M'Naghten. One of these experts was a very young Dr. Laszlo Kreizler, who, along with several other alienists, found Pomeroy quite sane. The judge in the case ultimately agreed with this group, but he took special pains to say that he had found Dr. Kreizler's particular explanation of the boy-fiend's behavior arcane and quite possibly obscene.

Such a statement was not surprising, given Laszlo's heavy emphasis on Pomeroy's family life. But it was another part of Kreizler's twenty-year-old investigation, I suddenly realized as we neared Sing Sing, that was of particular significance with regard to our present purposes: Pomeroy had been born with a harelip, and during infancy had contracted a fever that left his face pockmarked and one of his eyes, even more portentously, ulcerated and lifeless. Even at the time it hadn't seemed coincidental that Pomeroy had taken special care to mutilate the eyes of his victims during his vicious outings; but at the time of his trial he'd always refused to discuss that aspect of his behavior and thus prevented any solid conclusions from being drawn.

"I don't understand, Kreizler," I said, as our train lurched to a stop at the Sing Sing station. "You say you didn't make the connection between Pomeroy and our case—so why are we here?"

"You can thank Adolf Meyer," Kreizler answered, as we stepped to the station platform and were approached by an old man in a moth-eaten cap who had a rig for hire. "I was on the telephone with him for several hours today."

"Dr. Meyer?" I asked. "How much did you tell him?"

"Everything," Kreizler answered simply. "My trust in Meyer is absolute. Even though, in certain matters, he believes I'm off course. He quite agrees with Sara, for instance, about the role of a woman in the childhood formation of our killer. In fact, that was what brought Pomeroy to mind, along with the eyes."

"The role of a woman?" We had gotten into the old man's rig and were rolling away from the station toward the prison. "Kreizler, what do you mean?"

"Never mind, John," he answered, looking out for the prison walls as the light around us began to diminish rapidly. "You'll find out soon

enough, and there are things you need to know before we go inside. First of all, the warden agreed to this visit only after I offered a fairly sizable bribe, and he will not greet us personally when we arrive. Only one other man, a guard called Lasky, knows who we are and what our purpose is. He will take the money and then guide us in and out, hopefully unnoticed. Say as little as possible, and nothing to Pomeroy."

"Why not to Pomeroy? He's not an official of the prison."

"True," Laszlo answered, as the monotonous edifice of Sing Sing's thousand-cell main block appeared just ahead of us. "But although I believe Jesse can help us with the question of the mutilations, he's entirely too perverse to do so if he knows what we're up to. So, for a variety of reasons, make no mention of your name or our work at any point. I hardly need remind you"—Kreizler lowered his voice as we reached the prison's front gate—"how very many dangers inhabit this place."

CHAPTER 23

Sing Sing's main block ran parallel to the Hudson, with several outbuildings, shops, and the two-hundred-cell women's jail running perpendicular to it and toward the riverfront. A series of tall chimneys rose out of various buildings on the grounds and completed the image of a very dreary factory, one whose principal product, by that point in its history, was human misery. Convicts shared cells originally designed for individual prisoners, and the little maintenance work that was done in the place was not enough to counteract the powerful forces of decrepitude: the sights and smells of decay were everywhere. Even before we passed through the main gate, Kreizler and I could hear the monotonous sound of marching feet echoing out of the yard, and while this unhappy tramp was no longer punctuated by the crack of the cat—lashing had been outlawed in 1847—the ominous wooden clubs worn by the guards left no doubt about the primary method of maintaining discipline in the place.

The guard Lasky, an enormous, ill-shaved man of appropriately black temperament, eventually appeared, and after following him through the stone pathways and patchy grass borders of the yard we entered the main cell block. In one corner near the door several prisoners wearing iron and wood yokes that held their arms up and away from their bodies were being angrily berated by a group of guards, whose dark uniforms were no more tidy than our man Lasky's and whose dispositions seemed, if anything, worse. As we entered the cell block proper, a sudden shout of pain shook Kreizler and me: inside one of the little four-by-eight-foot chambers more guards were going at one prisoner with a "hummingbird," an electrical device that administered painful shocks. Both Kreizler and I had seen all this before, but familiarity did not breed acceptance. As we kept moving, I glanced at Laszlo once and saw my own reaction reflected in his face:

given such a penal system, the high rate of recidivism in our society was really no mystery at all.

Jesse Pomeroy was being held all the way at the other end of the block, making it necessary for us to walk past dozens more cells full of faces that displayed an enormous range of emotions, from the deepest anguish and sorrow to the most sullen rage. As the rule of silence was enforced at all times we heard no distinct human voices, only an occasional whisper; and the echo of our own steps throughout the cell block, combined with the unceasing scrutiny of the prisoners, soon became almost maddening. When we reached the end of the building we entered a small, dank hallway that led into a tiny room with no real windows, just small chinks in the stone walls near the ceiling. Jesse Pomeroy was sitting in a strange sort of wooden stall inside this room. The stall had water pipes coming out of its top, but its interior was, so far as I could tell, bone dry. After a few seconds of puzzling with it, I realized what the thing was: an infamous “ice water bath,” in which particularly ill-behaved prisoners had formerly been doused with pressurized freezing water. The treatment had resulted in so many deaths from shock that it had been outlawed decades earlier. Apparently, though, no one had ever bothered to dismantle the contraption; no doubt the guards still found even the threat of such torment effective.

Pomeroy was wearing a heavy set of shackles on his wrists, and an iron “collar cap” rested on his shoulders and surrounded his head. This latter device, a grotesque punishment for particularly unruly prisoners, was a two-foot-high barred cage, and its weight, equal to that of the prisoner’s head, offered unending discomfort that drove many victims to the verge of madness. Despite both the shackles and the collar cap, however, Jesse had a book in his hand and was quietly reading. When he looked up at us I took careful note of the pocked skin of his face, the ugly disfigurement of his upper lip (which was barely covered by a stringy, weak mustache), and finally his milky, repulsive left eye. It was quite apparent why we’d come.

“Well!” he said quietly, getting to his feet. Even though Jesse was in his thirties and wearing the tall cage around his head, he was short enough to be able to stand inside the old stall. A smile came onto his ugly mouth, one that displayed the peculiar blend of suspicion, surprise, and satisfaction common to convicts who receive unexpected visitors. “Dr. Kreizler, if I’m not very much mistaken.”

Kreizler managed a smile that seemed quite genuine. “Jesse. It’s been a long time, I’m surprised you remember me.”

"Oh, I remember you, all right," Pomeroy answered, in a boyish tone that was nonetheless laced with threat. "I remember all of you." He studied Laszlo for another second, then turned suddenly to me. "But I've never seen *you* before."

"No," Kreizler said, before I could answer. "You haven't." Laszlo turned to our guide, who was looking very put-upon. "All right, Lasky. You can wait outside." Kreizler handed him a large wad of money.

Lasky's face achieved something like a pleased look, though he only said "Yes, sir," before turning to Pomeroy. "You watch yourself, Jesse. Bad as you've had it today, it could still get worse."

Pomeroy didn't acknowledge that statement, but kept on watching Kreizler as Lasky departed. "Pretty hard to get an education in this place," Jesse said, after the door had closed. "But I'm trying. I figure maybe that's where I went wrong—no education. I taught myself Spanish, you know." He continued to sound very much like the young man he'd been twenty years ago.

Laszlo nodded. "Admirable. I see you're wearing a collar cap."

Jesse laughed. "Ahh—they *claim* I burned a guy's face with a cigarette while he was sleeping. They say I stayed up all night, making an arm out of wire just so's I could reach him with the butt through the bars. But I ask you—" He turned my way, the milky eye floating aimlessly in his head. "Does that sound like me?" A small laugh escaped him, pleased and mischievous—again just like a young boy's.

"I gather, then, that you've grown tired of skinning rats alive," Kreizler said. "When I was here several years ago, I heard that you'd been asking other prisoners to catch them for you."

Still another chuckle, this one almost embarrassed. "Rats. They do squirm and squeal. Bite you pretty good, too, if you're not careful." He displayed several small but nasty scars on his hands.

Kreizler nodded. "As angry as you were twenty years ago, eh, Jesse?"

"I wasn't angry twenty years ago," Pomeroy answered, without losing his grin. "I was *crazy*. You people were just too stupid to figure that out, is all. What the hell are you doing here, anyway, Doc?"

"Call it a reassessment," Kreizler answered cagily. "I sometimes like to drop in on old cases, to measure their progress. And since I had

business in the prison, anyway—"

For the first time Pomeroy's voice became deadly serious. "Don't play games with me, Doc. Even with these cuffs on I could have your eyes out before Lasky gets through that door."

Kreizler's face lit up a bit at that, but his tone remained cool. "I suppose you'd consider that another demonstration of your insanity?"

Jesse chuckled. "Wouldn't you?"

"I didn't twenty years ago," Kreizler answered with a shrug. "You mutilated the eyes of both the children you killed, as well as those of several you tortured. But I saw no madness in it—it was quite understandable, actually."

"Oh?" Pomeroy turned playful again. "How's that?"

Kreizler paused a moment, then leaned forward. "I've yet to see a man driven truly insane by simple envy, Jesse."

Pomeroy's expression went blank, and he shot a hand toward his face so quickly that it banged against the bars of the collar cap painfully. Tightening both hands into fists he seemed on the verge of springing up, and I got ready for trouble; but then he just laughed it off. "Let me tell you something, Doc—if you paid for that education of yours, you got took. You figger just because I got a bum eye I'd go around fixing people with two good ones? Not likely. Look at me—I'm a *catalogue* of Mother Nature's mistakes. How come I never cut anybody's mouth up, or carved the skin off their faces?" It was Jesse's turn to lean closer. "And if it's just envy, Doc, how come you ain't out chopping off people's arms?"

I turned quickly to Kreizler, and could see that he hadn't been ready for such a remark. But he'd long ago learned to control his reactions to anything a subject might say, and he only blinked once or twice without taking his eyes from Pomeroy. Jesse, however, was able to read into those blinks, and he sat back with a satisfied grin.

"Yeah, you're smart, all right," he chuckled.

"Then the mutilation of the eyes meant nothing," Kreizler said; and looking back I can see that he was maneuvering carefully. "Simply random acts of violence."

"Don't put words in my mouth, Doc." Pomeroy's voice took on a

warning edge again. “We been through that, a long time ago. All I’m saying is I didn’t have a sane reason to do it.”

Kreizler cocked his head judiciously. “Perhaps. But, since you’re unwilling to state what reason you did have, the argument is pointless.” Laszlo got up. “And, as I’ve a train to catch back to New York—”

“Sit down.” The violence embodied in the command was almost palpable; but Kreizler nonetheless made a pointed show of being unimpressed. Pomeroy grew uneasy at that. “I’ll only tell you this once,” Jesse went on urgently. “I was crazy then, but I ain’t crazy anymore—which means that, when I think back to it now, I can see everything pretty clear. There wasn’t any sane reason for me to do what I did to them kids. I just—it was just more than I could stand, that’s all, and I had to stop it.”

Laszlo knew that he was close. As a further inducement he sat back down, and then spoke very softly. “Had to stop what, Jesse?”

Pomeroy looked up at the small chink in the top of the blank stone wall, through which a few stars were now visible. “The staring,” he mumbled, in an altogether new and detached tone of voice. “The watching. All the time, the watching. That had to stop.” He turned our way again, and it seemed to me there were tears in his good eye; his mouth, however, had curled into a smile again. “You know, I used to go to the menagerie—in town? This was when I was real small. And it used to occur to me that everything those animals did, people were watching them. Just staring at them, with those dumb, blank faces, bug-eyed and hang-jawed—especially the kids, because they were too stupid to know any better. And those goddamned animals would look back, and you could see they was mad, God damn me, ferocious was the word, all right. All they wanted was to rip those people apart, just to get them to knock it off. Pacing back and forth, back and forth, thinking that if they could get out for just one minute they’d show ’em what you get when you never leave a thing alone. Well, I might not’ve been in a cage, Doc, but those dumb damned eyes was everywhere around me, all the same, ever since I could remember. Staring, watching, all the time, everywhere. You tell me, Doc, you tell me if that ain’t enough to drive somebody crazy. And when I got big enough, and I’d see one of those dumb little bastards standing there, licking a piece of candy with his eyes popping out of his head—well, Doc, the fact is, I *wasn’t* in no cage back then, so there wasn’t nothing to stop me from doing what needed to be done.”

Pomeroy made no move after he'd stopped talking, but sat stone still and waited for a reaction from Kreizler.

"You say it was always that way, Jesse," Laszlo said. "For as long as you can remember? With everyone you knew?"

"Everyone but my dad," Pomeroy answered, with a humorless, almost pitiable laugh. "He must've got so tired of looking at me he ran off. Not that I know—I don't remember him at all. But it's what I figured, based on how my mama used to act."

Again, Kreizler's face danced with anticipation for the briefest of instants. "And how was that?"

"That was like—*this*!" In a flash Jesse was up and holding his caged head just a couple of feet away from Laszlo's face. I got to my feet, but Jesse made no further move forward. "Tell your bodyguard he can set down, Doc," he said, his good eye locked on Kreizler. "I'm just giving you a demonstration. Always like this, was how it seemed to me. Every minute, watching me, what for I couldn't tell you. For my own good, she used to say, but she didn't act like it." The collar cap was weighing heavy on Jesse's outstretched neck, and he finally turned away. "Yeah, she sure took an interest in this old face of mine." The dead laugh came back. "Never wanted to kiss it, though, I can tell you!" Something seemed to strike him, and he paused quietly, again looking up at the chink in the wall. "That first boy I went after, I made him kiss it. He didn't want to, but after I—well. He did it."

Laszlo waited a few seconds before asking: "And the man whose face you burned today?"

Jesse spat at the floor through the bars of the collar cap. "That idiot—the same damned thing! Just couldn't keep his eyes to himself, I musta told him twenty goddamned times to—" Catching himself, Pomeroy suddenly spun on Kreizler, with real fear in his face; then the fear quickly vanished, and that lethal smile came back. "Whup. Looks like I shot it to hell, didn't I? Fine piece of work, Doc."

Laszlo stood up. "It was none of my doing, Jesse."

"Yeah," Pomeroy laughed. "Maybe you're right. As long as I live, I'll never know how you get me to talking that way. If I had a hat, I'd tip it. But, since I don't—"

In one fast move Pomeroy bent over, grabbed a gleaming object out of one of his boots, and held it out toward us menacingly. Tightening

his body he stood on his toes, ready to spring forward. I backed up instinctively against the wall behind me, and Kreizler did likewise, though more slowly. As a series of wet chortles came out of Pomeroy's mouth, I looked closer to see that his weapon was a long shard of thick glass, wrapped at one end with a bloodstained rag.

CHAPTER 24

More swiftly than most men could have managed it even without being shackled, Pomeroy kicked the stool he'd been sitting on across the room and jammed it under the knob of the door, preventing entry from the hall outside.

"Don't worry," he said, still grinning. "I got no desire to cut you two up—I just want to have a little fun with that big idiot outside!" He turned away from us, laughed again, and called out: "Hey, Lasky! You ready to lose your job? When the warden sees what I done to these boys, he won't let you guard the shithouse!"

Lasky cursed in reply and began pounding on the door. Pomeroy kept the shard of glass leveled in the general direction of our throats but made no more threatening move, just laughed harder and harder as the guard's rage mounted. It wasn't long before the door began to loosen on its hinges, and soon after that the stool fell away from the knob. In a noisy burst Lasky hurtled into the room, the door crashing to the floor as he did. After struggling to his feet he saw first that Kreizler and I were all right and next that Pomeroy was armed. Grabbing the wooden stool from where it lay, Lasky went after Jesse, who made only a halfhearted attempt to resist.

Throughout this encounter Kreizler displayed no apparent fear for our safety, but kept shaking his head slowly as if he knew exactly what was happening. Lasky soon had the shard of glass out of Pomeroy's hands, after which he began to pummel the prisoner mercilessly with his fat fists. The fact that he couldn't get at Jesse's face seemed only to outrage him further, and the shots that he landed to the prisoner's body became all the more savage. Yet even as Pomeroy cried out in pain, he continued to laugh—a wild kind of laughter, full of abandon and even, in some awful way, delight. I was

utterly mystified and paralyzed; but Kreizler, after several minutes of this display, stepped forward and began to pull at Lasky's shoulders.

"Stop it!" he shouted to the guard. "Lasky, for God's sake, stop, you fool!" He kept yanking and tugging, but the huge Lasky was oblivious to his efforts. "Lasky! Stop, man, don't you see, you're doing what he wants! *He's enjoying it!*"

The guard continued to pound away, and finally Kreizler, himself consumed by what seemed a sort of desperation, used the full weight of his body to shove Lasky away from Pomeroy. Surprised and enraged, Lasky got to his feet and took a hefty swing at Kreizler's head, which Laszlo easily eluded. Seeing that the guard intended to keep coming after him, Kreizler balled his right hand into a fist and gave Lasky several quick shots that were vividly reminiscent of his very creditable stand against Roosevelt almost twenty years earlier. As Lasky reeled and fell back, Kreizler caught his breath and stood over him.

"It's got to stop, Lasky!" he declared, in a voice so passionate that it made me rush over and stand between him and the prostrate guard, in order to prevent my friend from continuing his attack. Pomeroy lay on the floor, writhing in agony, trying to clutch his ribs with his shackled hands and still laughing grotesquely. Kreizler turned to him, breathing hard, and softly repeated:

"It's got to stop."

As Lasky's head cleared, his eyes focused on Kreizler. "You son of a bitch!" He tried to get to his feet, but it was a struggle. "Help," he gasped, spitting a little blood onto the floor. "Help! Guard in trouble!" His voice echoed out into the hall. "The old shower room! Help me, damn it!"

I could hear running feet coming toward us from what sounded like the far end of the building. "Laszlo, we've got to move," I said quickly, knowing that we were now in very deep trouble: Lasky did not look like a man who would forgo revenge, especially if he had the aid of compatriots. Kreizler was still looking at Pomeroy, and I had to pull him out of the room. "Laszlo, damn you!" I said. "You'll get us killed yet—pick up your feet and run!"

As we darted out the door Lasky made a dizzy lunge at us, but only succeeded in throwing himself back onto the floor. We passed four more guards in the cell block hallway, and I quickly told them that

there'd been trouble between Lasky and Pomeroy and that the guard had been hurt. Seeing that Kreizler and I were uninjured, the guards sped on their way, while I forced Laszlo to make a dash past another group of uniformed men who stood in a confused huddle at the front gate. It didn't take long for the guards inside to learn the truth of the situation, and soon they were howling threats as they chased after us. Fortunately, the old man we'd hired was still outside the prison gate with his rig, and by the time the pursuing guards appeared we were several hundred yards away from the place, making for the train station and—in my case, at least—praying that we wouldn't have to wait long once we got there.

The first train to appear belonged to a small local line and was scheduled to make a dozen stops before it reached Grand Central; our predicament being what it was, however, we accepted the lengthy protraction of our trip and hopped on board. The cars were full of small-town travelers who evidently found our appearance shocking; and I must admit, if we looked half as much like fleeing outlaws as I felt, those good people were justified in their interpretation. In order to ease their anxiety, Kreizler and I went to the last of the train's cars and stood outside its rear door on the observation platform. Watching the walls and chimneys of Sing Sing disappear into the black woods of the Hudson Valley as we sped away, I produced a small flask of whiskey, from which we both took deep pulls. When at last we could no longer see any part of the prison, we began to breathe easily again.

"You've got one hell of a lot of explaining to do," I said to Laszlo, as we stood in the warm rush of air that blew back from the engine of the train. My feeling of relief was so pronounced that I could not suppress a smile, though I was quite serious about wanting answers. "You can start with why we came here."

Kreizler took another pull from my flask, then studied it. "This is a particularly barbaric blend, Moore," he said, avoiding my demand for information. "I'm a bit shocked."

I drew myself up. *"Kreizler…"*

"Yes, yes, I know, John," he replied, waving me to silence. "You're entitled to some answers. But just where to begin?" Sighing once, Laszlo took another drink. "As I told you before, I spoke to Meyer earlier today. I gave him a complete outline of our work to date. I then told him about my—my exchange of words with Sara." Grunting once shamefacedly, Laszlo kicked at the railing of the deck. "I really must apologize to her for that."

"Yes," I replied, "you must. What did Meyer say?"

"That he found Sara's points concerning the role of a woman in the formation quite sound," Kreizler answered, still a bit contrite. "I suddenly found myself arguing with him as I'd argued with Sara." Taking another pull from the flask, Kreizler grunted again and murmured, "The fallacy, damn it all…"

"The what?" I asked, bewildered.

"Nothing," Kreizler answered, with a shake of his head. "An aberration in my own thinking that has caused me to waste precious days. But it's of no importance now. What *is* important is that as I thought the whole issue over this afternoon I found that both Meyer and Sara were right—there was powerful evidence that a woman had played an ominous role in the formation of our killer. His obsessive furtiveness, the particular breed of sadism, all such factors pointed toward the sort of conclusions that Sara had outlined. As I say, I tried to argue with Meyer, just as I'd argued with Sara, but then he brought up Jesse Pomeroy, and used my own twenty-year-old words to contradict what I was now saying. Pomeroy, after all, never even knew his own father, nor did he ever, so far as I have been able to tell, suffer excessive physical punishment as a child. Yet his was—and is—a personality in many ways similar to that of the man we seek. As you know, Pomeroy was steadfast in his unwillingness to discuss his mutilative activities at the time of his capture. I could only hope that time and solitary confinement had loosened his resolve. We were lucky there."

I nodded, thinking back to Pomeroy's statement. "What he said about his mother, and other children, and the scrutiny he was always under—do you think that's really crucial?"

"I do, indeed," Laszlo answered, his words starting to move at a characteristically quicker clip. "And so is his pronounced emphasis on the unwillingness of the people who inhabited his world to touch him. You remember what he said, about his own mother being unwilling to kiss his face? Quite probably the only physical contact with others that he ever knew as a boy was taunting or tormenting in nature. And from there we can draw a direct line to his violence."

"How so?"

"Well, Moore, I'll offer you yet another statement from Professor James. It's a concept that he often brought up in class in the old days,

and one which struck me like a thunderbolt the first time I read it in the *Principles.*" Laszlo turned to the sky and tried hard to remember the exact wording. "'If all cold things were wet and all wet things cold, if all hard things pricked our skin, and no other things did so; is it likely that we should discriminate between coldness and wetness, and hardness and pungency respectively?' As always, James wouldn't see this idea through to its logical conclusion, in the dynamic realm of behavior. He discussed only functions, such as taste and touch—but everything I have ever seen indicates that it works dynamically, as well. Imagine it, Moore. Imagine that you had—because of disfigurement, cruelty, or some other misfortune—never known any human touch that was not stern or even harsh. How should you feel about it?"

I shrugged and lit a cigarette. "Rotten, I guess."

"Perhaps. But in all likelihood you would *not* feel that it was extraordinary. Put it this way—if I say the word 'mother' to you, your mind will immediately run through a set of unconscious but entirely familiar associations based on experience. So will mine. And both of our sets of associations will doubtless be a mixture of the good and the bad, as will almost any person's. But how many people will have a set of associations as uniformly negative as we know Jesse Pomeroy's to be? Indeed, in Jesse's case we can go beyond the limited concept of mother to the notion of humanity generally. Say the word 'people' to him and his mind leaps only to images of humiliation and pain, as routinely as if I were to say 'train' to you and you were to answer 'movement.'"

"Is that what you meant when you told Lasky that Pomeroy was enjoying the beating he was getting?"

"It was. You may have noticed that Jesse deliberately constructed that entire event. It's not hard to see why. Throughout his childhood he was surrounded by tormentors, and for the last twenty years virtually the only people he's come into contact with have been men like Lasky. His experiences, both in prison and out, cause him to believe that interaction with his own species can only be adversarial and violent—he even compares himself empathetically to an animal in a menagerie. Such is his reality. That he will be beaten and berated, given his current circumstances, he knows; all he can do is attempt to set the terms of that abuse, to manipulate the participants into their actions as he once manipulated the children he tortured and killed. It's the only kind of power or satisfaction—the only method of ensuring his psychic survival—he's ever known, and he therefore employs it."

As I smoked and struggled with this idea, I began to pace the deck. “But isn’t there something—well, something inside of him, inside of any person that would object to that kind of a situation? I mean, wouldn’t there be sadness or despair, even about his own *mother*? The *desire* to be loved, at least? Isn’t every child born with—”

“Be careful, Moore,” Kreizler warned as he lit a cigarette of his own. “You’re about to suggest that we’re born with specific *a priori* concepts of need and desire—an understandable thought, perhaps, were there any evidence to support it. The organism knows one drive from the beginning—survival. And yes, for most of us, that drive is somehow intimately bound up with the notion of a mother. But were our experiences terribly different—if the concept of mother suggested frustration and finally danger, rather than sustenance and nurturing—the instinct for survival would cause us to structure our outlook differently. Jesse Pomeroy experienced this. I now believe *our* killer did, too.” Laszlo drew heavily on his cigarette. “I can thank Pomeroy, for that. Meyer, as well. But most of all, I must thank Sara. And I intend to do so.”

Kreizler was true to that declaration. At one of the small towns we passed through on our way back to Grand Central he asked the station attendant if it would be possible to send what he assured the man was an urgent wire ahead to New York. The attendant agreed and Kreizler wrote out the message, which ordered Sara to meet us at Delmonico’s at eleven o’clock. Laszlo and I had no time to change for dinner once we reached the city, but Charlie Delmonico had seen us in far worse shape in our time, and when we arrived at Madison Square he made us feel as welcome as ever.

Sara was waiting at a table in the main dining room, one that looked out onto the park across Fifth Avenue and was as far from the other parties in the restaurant as possible. She expressed both concern for our safety—the wire had made her anxious—and then, once she saw that we were unharmed, great curiosity about our trip. Her manner with Kreizler, even before he offered her the promised set of apologies, was quite pleasant, and therefore odd: I wouldn’t say that Sara was the sort of person to hold a grudge, exactly, but once stung she was usually very wary of the guilty party. I tried hard, however, to ignore the strange chemistry between them, and kept my attention on the business before us.

Sara said that given what we’d learned from the Pomeroy visit we could now safely assume that our man was, like Jesse, extremely sensitive about his physical appearance. Such sensitivity, she said,

more than explained the profundity of the anger toward children: being perpetually mocked and cast out during one's early years would, obviously, produce a fury that time alone would not necessarily extinguish. Kreizler also tended toward the theory that our man was in some way physically deformed. I, however, having several weeks earlier been the first to advance such a theory, now warned both of them to be very careful about accepting it. We already knew that the man we were pursuing stood over six feet tall and could get up and down the sides of buildings by way of a simple rope while carrying an adolescent boy: if he was deformed, it could not be in his arms or his legs, or anywhere, really, save his face—and that would narrow our search down quite a bit. Kreizler said that, given this consideration, he was prepared to narrow things down still further by declaring that it was the killer's eyes that were the location of his deformity. The man was concentrating on his victims' ocular organs more carefully and consistently than even Pomeroy had done, a fact that Kreizler considered more than significant: it was, he said, decisive.

Throughout our meal Kreizler encouraged Sara to at last fully explain what sort of a woman she thought might have played the kind of sinister role in our killer's life that she'd postulated a week earlier. Jumping right in, Sara said she believed that only a mother could have had the kind of profound impact that was evident in this case. An abusive governess or female relative might be harrowing for a child, but if that child had recourse to his natural mother for protection and consolation the effect would have been dramatically reduced. It was apparent to Sara that the man we were after had never known such recourse, a circumstance that could be explained in a number of ways; but Sara's preferred theory was that the woman had not wished to bear children in the first place. She'd only done so, Sara speculated, because she'd either become pregnant or had been offered no other socially acceptable role to play by the particular world in which she lived. The end result of all this was that the woman had deeply resented the children she did bear, and for this reason Sara thought there was an excellent chance that the killer was either an only child or had very few siblings: childbearing was not an experience that the mother would have wanted to repeat many times. Any physical deformity in one of the children she did have would, of course, have heightened the mother's already negative feelings toward that child, but Sara did not believe that deformity alone was enough to explain such a relationship. Kreizler agreed with her on this point, saying that while Jesse Pomeroy attributed all his difficulties with his mother to his appearance, there were certainly additional and deeper factors involved as well.

One conclusion was becoming increasingly clear from all this: it was unlikely that we were dealing with people who enjoyed the advantages of wealth. In the first place, wealthy parents are seldom obliged to cope with their children if they find them troublesome or undesirable. Then, too, a young woman of means in the 1860s (the period during which, we suspected, our killer had been born) could have devoted her life to pursuits other than motherhood, though such a choice would admittedly have prompted more criticism and comment at that time than it would have some thirty years later. Of course, an accidental pregnancy could happen to anyone, rich or poor; but the extreme sexual and scatological fixations displayed by our killer had suggested to Sara close scrutiny and frequent humiliation, and these in turn spoke of a life lived at very close quarters—the kind of life that poverty breeds. Sara was delighted to hear that Dr. Meyer had voiced the same thoughts during his conversation with Kreizler earlier that day; and she was even more delighted when Kreizler offered a very decent salute to her efforts as we drank some final glasses of port.

This moment of relaxed satisfaction passed quickly, however. Kreizler produced his small notebook and reminded us that there were just five short days till the Feast of the Ascension, the next significant date on the Christian calendar. It was now time, he said, for our investigation to dispense with an attitude of pure research and analysis and move toward a posture of engagement. We had gained a good general idea of what our killer looked like, as well as how, where, and when he would strike. We were ready at last to try to anticipate and prevent that next move. I felt a sudden flood of anxiety in the pit of my very full stomach at that statement, and Sara looked to be experiencing much the same sort of reaction. But we both knew that this development was inevitable; was, indeed, what we'd been actively working toward since the beginning. And so we stiffened our resolve as we left the restaurant and gave no voice to any sort of apprehension.

Once outside I felt a very meaningful tug on my arm from Sara. I turned to find her looking away from me, but in a way that clearly indicated that she wanted to talk. When Kreizler offered to share a hansom with her as far as Gramercy Park she declined, and as soon as he was gone she ushered me into Madison Square Park and under a gas lamp.

"Well?" I said, noticing that her aspect had become somewhat agitated. "This had better be important, Sara. It's been a hell of an evening, and I'm—"

"It *is* important," Sara answered quickly, producing a folded sheet of paper from her bag. "That is, I *think* it is." Her brows came together and she seemed to be weighing something carefully before showing me the paper. "John, how much do you actually know about Dr. Kreizler's past? His family, I mean."

I was surprised by the topic. "His family? As much as anyone, I suppose. I visited them quite a bit when I was a boy."

"Were they—were they, well, happy?"

I shrugged. "Always seemed to be. With good reason, too. His parents were about the most socially sought-after couple in town. You wouldn't know it to see them now, of course. Laszlo's father had a stroke a couple of years ago, and they stay pretty shut up. They have a house on Fourteenth Street and Fifth Avenue."

"Yes," Sara said quickly, surprising me again. "I know."

"Well," I went on, "back then they were always throwing big parties and introducing luminaries from all over Europe into New York society. It was quite a scene—we all loved going there. But why do you ask, Sara? What's this all about?"

She paused, sighed, and then held the piece of paper out to me. "I've been trying all week to understand why he was sticking so stubbornly to the idea that a violent father and a passive mother raised our killer. I developed a theory, and went through the records of the Fifteenth Precinct to test it. This is what I found."

The document was a report filed by one Roundsman O'Bannion, who, on a September night in 1862—when Laszlo was a boy of only six—had investigated a domestic disturbance at the Kreizler home. The yellowing report contained just a few details: it spoke of Laszlo's father, apparently drunk, spending the night in the precinct house under a charge of assault (the charge was later dropped), and then of a local surgeon being brought to the Kreizler home to treat a young boy whose left arm had been badly shattered.

Conclusions weren't hard to draw; given my lifelong acquaintance with Laszlo, however, as well as the image I'd always had of his family, my mind resisted them. "But," I said, refolding the document absentmindedly, "but we were told that he fell…"

Sara let out a deep breath. "Apparently not."

During a long pause I looked around at the park, somewhat stunned. Familiar conceptions die hard, and their passage can be damned disorienting; for a few moments the trees and buildings of Madison Square looked strangely different. Then an image of Laszlo as a boy suddenly flashed through my head, followed by another of his big, outwardly gregarious father and his vivacious mother. As I saw these faces and forms I simultaneously remembered the comment that Jesse Pomeroy had made during our visit to Sing Sing about chopping off people's arms; and from there my mind leapt to a seemingly meaningless remark that Laszlo himself had made on the train ride home:

"'The fallacy, damn it all,'" I whispered.

"What did you say, John?" Sara asked quietly.

I shook my head hard, trying to clear it. "Something Kreizler mentioned tonight. About how much time he's wasted in the last few days. He spoke of 'the fallacy,' but I didn't get the reference. Now, though…"

Sara gasped a little as she, too, realized the answer. "The psychologist's fallacy," she said. "In James's *Principles*."

I nodded. "The business about a psychologist getting his own point of view mixed up with his subject's. That's what's had him in its grip." A few more silent moments passed, and then I looked down at the report, feeling a sudden sense of practical urgency that made me put off the nearly impossible task of absorbing the full implications of the document. "Sara," I said. "Have you discussed this with anyone else?" She shook her head slowly. "And do they know at headquarters that you took the report?" Another shake of the head. "But you've realized what it suggests?" She nodded this time and I reciprocated; then, slowly and deliberately, I tore the report into pieces, and set them on a patch of grass.

Pulling a box of matches from my pocket and striking one, I started to light the bits of paper, saying firmly, "No one is to know anything about this. Your own curiosity's been satisfied, and if his behavior becomes erratic again, we'll know why. But beyond that, no good can ever come of its getting out. Do you agree?"

Sara crouched by me and nodded once more. "I'd already decided the same thing."

We watched the burning pieces of paper turn into flakes of smoking

ash, both of us silently hoping that this would be the last we'd ever need to speak of the matter, that Laszlo's behavior would never again warrant investigation into his past. But as it turned out, the unhappy tale so sketchily referred to in the now-incinerated report did surface again at a later point in our investigation, to cause a very real—indeed an almost fatal—crisis.

CHAPTER 25

The idea of placing New York's chief boy-pandering venues under careful scrutiny on those days when we thought our killer might strike originated with Lucius Isaacson. There was no denying that it would be a delicate piece of work. Every one of those bars and brothels could expect to lose a significant number of patrons if it became known that they were being watched. Cooperation from the proprietors was therefore highly unlikely: we'd have to position ourselves so as to elude both their notice and our killer's. Lucius readily admitted that he didn't have enough experience with such operations to chart a prudent course, so we summoned the one member of our band who we thought could provide expert advice: Stevie Taggert. Stevie had spent a good part of his criminal career robbing houses and flats, and the ways of surreptitious surveillance were known to him. I think the young man suspected he was in some kind of trouble when he walked into our headquarters that Saturday afternoon and found the rest of us seated in a semicircle and staring at him eagerly. And since Kreizler had often told Stevie that he should try to forget his criminal ways, it was doubly difficult to convince the suspicious boy to talk about such things. Once satisfied that we really did need his help, however, Stevie pursued the conversation with what seemed real enjoyment.

We had originally thought to place one member of our team outside each of the houses most likely to be visited: Paresis Hall, the Golden Rule, Shang Draper's in the Tenderloin, the Slide on Bleecker Street, and Frank Stephenson's Black and Tan, also on Bleecker, a dive that offered white women and children to black and Oriental men. But this plan, Stevie assured us as he chewed noisily on a thick piece of licorice, was badly flawed. First of all, we knew that the killer was traveling via rooftops: we would be more assured of success, and less likely to raise suspicions, if we attempted to intercept him on one of

those high arenas. Furthermore, even discounting the quite physical opposition that we might run into from the house managers in the course of our efforts, there was the fact that the man we were hoping to catch was large and powerful: he could easily turn the tables and get the drop on *us,* given his familiarity with rooftop navigation. Stevie recommended placing two operatives at each site, which meant that we would not only have to enlist three more participants (Cyrus, Roosevelt, and Stevie himself eventually filled out the list) but also eliminate one location. According to Stevie, this last problem was easily solved; he found it extremely unlikely that our killer would venture into the Tenderloin, a noisy, crowded, brightly lit area that offered too many chances of being seen or apprehended. Nonchalantly taking a cigarette from a box on my desk and lighting it, Stevie said that we could therefore dispense with Shang Draper's; and as he blew little rings of smoke, he went on to recommend that we gain access to the various rooftops involved by entering adjacent buildings under false pretenses. This would help to ensure that things seemed thoroughly natural to the killer when and if he showed up. Kreizler nodded in agreement, then plucked Stevie's cigarette out of his mouth and crushed it on the floor. Disappointed, the boy went back to his licorice.

When to begin and end our surveillance was the next issue addressed. Would the murderer visit the chosen disorderly house on the eve of Ascension Day, and actually kill his victim during the small hours of the feast itself, or would he wait until the next night? His pattern suggested the latter, probably because, Kreizler explained, the anger which he felt (for whatever range of reasons) mounted throughout the daytime hours on the holidays selected, perhaps as he observed people going to and coming from holiday church services. Whatever the specific trigger, nightfall brought an unstoppable explosion. None of us could argue this reasoning; and so it was decided that we would position ourselves on Thursday night.

With the plan complete I grabbed my jacket and headed for the door. Marcus inquired as to my destination and I told him I was going down to the Golden Rule to see the boy Joseph and provide him with details of the killer's appearance and method.

"Is that wise?" Lucius asked in a worried tone, as he stacked some papers on his desk. "We're only five days away from putting this plan in motion, John. We don't want to do anything that would complicate matters by changing the normal routines of those places."

Sara looked puzzled. "Surely there's nothing wrong with giving the

boys every chance to avoid danger."

"Of course," Lucius answered quickly, "I'm not suggesting we put anybody in any more danger than we can avoid. It's just that—well, we've got to set this trap carefully."

"As always, the detective sergeant has a point," Kreizler said, taking my arm and walking to the door with me. "Be careful how much you tell your young friend, Moore."

"All I'm asking," Lucius went on, "is that we not reveal the probable date of the next attack. We're not even sure that that's when it's going to happen—but if it does, and if the boys have been alerted, the killer will almost certainly sense something. You can tell him anything else you feel is necessary."

"A reasonable arrangement," Kreizler decided, with a wave toward Lucius. Then, as I entered the elevator, Laszlo lowered his voice: "And remember, John, there's a very good chance that, while you may be helping the boy by warning him, you may also put him at great risk if you're seen in his company. Avoid it if you can."

After walking to the Golden Rule I arranged to meet Joseph in a small billiard parlor around the corner. When he arrived I noticed that his face was quite rosy after being scrubbed free of the usual paint, a fact that touched me. I remembered that our first interaction had involved a similar cleaning of Joseph's face; and I was struck by the thought that he hadn't wanted me to see him all made up this time, either. Indeed, his entire manner did not seem that of a boy-whore, when he was dealing with me, but rather that of a young man who desperately needed an older male friend; or was *I* now suffering from Professor James's famous fallacy, and allowing the way in which Joseph reminded me of my brother to influence my reading of the boy's behavior?

Joseph ordered himself a short beer in a manner that suggested he'd done so many times before (and which ruled out my presuming to lecture him about the perils of alcohol). As we started to knock some ivory balls around a table casually, I told Joseph I had some new information about the man who'd killed Ali ibn-Ghazi, and I asked him to pay very close attention, so that he'd be able to pass the news on to his friends. Then I launched into a physical description:

The man was tall, I said, about six-foot-two, and very strong. He was capable of lifting a boy like Joseph, or someone even larger,

without difficulty. Yet despite his size and strength, there was something wrong with him, something that he was very sensitive about. It was probably some part of his face; maybe his eyes. They might be injured, scarred, deformed in some way. Whatever the problem, he didn't like it when people mentioned it or looked at it. Joseph said that he'd never noticed such a man, but that a lot of the Golden Rule's customers hid their faces when they came in. I told him to watch for it in future, and went on to the subject of what the man might wear. Nothing fancy, I said, because he didn't want to attract attention to himself. Also, he probably didn't have much money, which meant that he couldn't afford expensive clothes. It was likely, as Marcus had told Joseph during our last visit, that he would be carrying a large bag; inside that bag were tools he used to climb up and down walls, in order to reach the rooms of the boys he was after without being detected.

Then came the hard part: I told Joseph that the man was especially careful about not being seen because he'd been in all the houses like the Golden Rule before and might be very easy for some (maybe most) of the boys to identify. He might even be someone they knew and trusted, someone who'd helped them out, who'd tried to show them how to make new lives for themselves. A settlement or charity worker, perhaps—maybe even a priest. The main thing was that he didn't look or sound like someone who could do the things he'd been doing.

Joseph kept track of all these details by ticking them off on his fingers, and when I'd finished he nodded and said, "Okay, okay, I've got it. But do you mind if I ask you something, Mr. Moore?"

"Fire away," I answered.

"Well, then—how is it you know all these things about the guy, anyway?"

"Sometimes," I said with a small laugh, "I'm a little confused about that, myself. Why?"

Joseph smiled, but also began to kick his legs nervously. "It's only because—well, a lot of my friends, they didn't believe me when I told them what you said last time. They didn't see how anybody could know. Thought maybe I was making it up. And then, a lot of people are going around saying it isn't even a person that's doing it. Some kind of—ghost, or something. That's what some people say."

"Yes. I've heard. But you'll be doing yourself a favor if you ignore

that kind of talk. There's a man behind it, all right. I can guarantee that, Joseph." I rubbed my hands together. "Now, then—how about a game?"

Over the years I've heard people say that the game of billiards (three-cushion, pocket, or what have you) is nothing more or less than a fast way for a young man to go to the devil. But the way I saw it, a career as a professional gambler—that nightmare of so many mothers and fathers in this city—would've been nothing but a step up for this boy; and so for the next hour or so I taught him most of the tricks of the table that I knew: it was a pleasant time, jarred only by the occasional recollection of where Joseph would be heading when we parted company. There was nothing, however, for me to do about that: such boys were their own men.

It was nearly dark by the time I got back to our headquarters, which was still alive with activity. Sara was on the telephone with Roosevelt, attempting to explain that there was no one else we could trust to fill the eighth surveillance spot on Thursday night and that he would therefore have to come along. Normally, Theodore would have required no urging; but recently his troubles at Mulberry Street had multiplied. Two of the men who sat on the Board of Commissioners with him, along with the chief of police, had decided to side with Boss Platt and the antireform forces. Roosevelt was being scrutinized more closely than ever by his enemies, in the hope that he would commit some indiscretion that would justify his dismissal. He did agree to be part of the surveillance effort, ultimately; but he had real misgivings.

Kreizler and the Isaacsons, meanwhile, were engaged in another spirited discussion of our killer's timing. Lucius had postulated that the one inconsistency in the man's schedule—the killing of Giorgio Santorelli on March 3rd—could be accounted for by the deceptively mundane phrase "I decided to wait" in the note to Mrs. Santorelli. It was distinctly possible, the younger Isaacson elaborated, that the sighting and selection of a victim were as crucial in their own way to the murderer's psychic satisfaction as the act of killing itself. Kreizler quite approved of this theory, and added that so long as the man experienced no interference with his intended goal—to murder the boy—he might even derive sadistic pleasure from the delay. This meant that the Santorelli killing could be made to fit the overall timing pattern, because the critical mental event had occurred on Ash Wednesday.

Laszlo and the Isaacsons parted company, however, over the question of whether the man struck on some holidays but not others

because he was only angered by certain religious stories and events. Kreizler didn't like this idea, because it got back to the notion of a religious maniac, a man obsessively, dementedly absorbed in the arcana of the Christian faith. Laszlo was still willing to consider the possibility that the man was (or at some point in his life had been) a priest; but he could not see any reason why, say, the tale of the Three Wise Men should not offer sufficient cause to kill, whereas the purification of the Virgin Mary apparently did. Marcus and Lucius protested that there had to be *some* reason why only certain holidays were selected, and Kreizler did agree; but he said that we simply hadn't found the contextual key to that particular part of the puzzle yet.

There being no guarantee that our Ascension Day surveillance plan would produce any results, we all pursued alternate lines of inquiry during the days leading up to it. Marcus and I kept diligently after our priest theory, while Kreizler, Lucius, and Sara engaged in a new and promising activity: canvassing asylums throughout our own and various other parts of the country, by cable and in person, to see if any of them had treated a patient who matched our emerging portrait within the last fifteen years. Despite his firm conviction that our killer was sane, Kreizler hoped that the man's idiosyncrasies had caused his commitment at some earlier point in his life. Perhaps when his secret taste for blood had first emerged he had committed some indiscretion that the average person (not to mention the average asylum superintendent) would have assumed was a symptom of some form of insanity. Whatever the exact circumstances, asylums kept fairly extensive records as a rule, and checking them seemed a prudent investment of time and energy.

On Ascension Eve we apportioned our responsibilities for the next night: Marcus and Sara, the latter carrying both her firearms, would take up watch on the roof of the Golden Rule; Kreizler and Roosevelt would man Paresis Hall, where Theodore's authority would be sufficient to keep Biff Ellison in line if there was trouble; Lucius and Cyrus would cover the Black and Tan, Cyrus's color offering a convenient explanation for their presence should such prove necessary; and Stevie and I would be just down Bleecker Street, atop the Slide. Positioned outside each of these houses would be several street arabs of Stevie's acquaintance, who, without being told any details of the operation, could be dispatched to bring assistance from the other locations in the event something did happen at any one of them. Roosevelt thought that this task might be better served by policemen, but Kreizler vehemently opposed such an idea. Privately, Laszlo told me he suspected that any contact between officers of the

law and the killer would result in the latter's quick death, Theodore's prohibitive orders notwithstanding. We had now experienced enough mysterious interference to know that there were forces far more powerful than Roosevelt at work, and those forces unquestionably had as their goal the complete suppression of the case. It was obvious that such a result could best be achieved through a quick dispatch of the apprehended suspect, which would circumvent the need for a trial with all its attendant publicity. Kreizler was determined to prevent this outcome, not only because it would be grievously criminal, but because it would eliminate any possibility of the killer's being examined to learn his motives as well.

As it turned out, all our anxious anticipation of what might happen on Ascension Day was in vain, for the night passed without incident. We took up our various surveillance positions and spent the long, slow hours until six A.M. battling no greater enemy than boredom. As a result, the days that followed were full of more useless arguments over why the killer should have elected to strike on Good Friday but not on Ascension Day. There was a growing feeling, voiced first by Sara, that the coincidence of the holidays and the murders might be nothing more than that; but Marcus and I remained firmly committed to the idea that our killer's calendar and that of the Christian faith were somehow connected, since this theory only helped our hypothesis about a rogue or defrocked priest being the killer. We urged that our interceptive sights be set on the next significant holiday—Pentecost, just eleven days after the Feast of the Ascension—and that we try to use the intervening time as productively as possible. Sad to say, though, Marcus and I ran into a brick wall with our priest research; and it began to seem that our entire theory might not be very much more than a well-reasoned waste of time.

Our teammates, on the other hand, did achieve some progress during the week before Pentecost: answers to the cables and letters that Sara, Lucius, and Kreizler had sent out to almost every reputable asylum in the country began to trickle in. Most of them were firmly negative, but a few offered hope, reporting that a man or men of the general physical stature that Kreizler had described, and characterized by at least some of the mental symptoms he'd noted, had been committed within their walls at some point during the past fifteen years. A few institutions even sent copies of case files along; and while none of these ultimately proved of any value, a brief note postmarked Washington, D.C., did create quite a stir one afternoon.

On that day I happened to be watching as Lucius strolled through the room, carrying a batch of the asylum letters and case files. He

caught sight of something, then suddenly spun on his heels, dropped the pile of papers, and stared at Kreizler's desk. His eyes went quite wide for a moment, and his forehead almost instantly began to perspire; but as he took out a handkerchief and began to mop the sweat away, his voice remained steady.

"Doctor—" he said to Laszlo, who was standing by the door talking with Sara. "This note from the superintendent of St. Elizabeth's—have you looked at it?"

"Only once," Kreizler answered, crossing over to where Lucius stood. "It didn't seem to offer very much."

"Yes, that was what I thought." Lucius picked up the letter. "The description's awfully vague—the reference to 'some sort of facial tic,' for instance, might cover a lot of ground."

Kreizler studied Lucius. "*But,* Detective Sergeant…?"

"But—" Lucius grappled with his thought. "Well, it's the postmark, Doctor: Washington. St. Elizabeth's is the federal government's principal asylum for the insane, isn't it?"

Kreizler paused for a moment; and then his black eyes jumped in their quick, electric way. "That's right," he said, quietly yet urgently. "But since they never mentioned the man's background, I didn't—" He knocked a fist against his forehead. "Fool!"

Laszlo made a dash for the telephone, and Lucius followed. "Given the legal situation in the capital," Lucius said, "it would hardly represent an unusual case."

"You've a mastery of understatement, Detective Sergeant," Kreizler said. "There are several such cases every *year,* in the capital!"

Sara was walking toward them, drawn by the excitement. "Lucius? What is it, what's struck you?"

"The postmark," Lucius said again, slapping at the letter. "There's a very troublesome little codicil to the Washington laws that deal with insanity and the involuntary commitment of patients to asylums. If the patient hasn't actually been adjudicated insane in the District of Columbia but is confined to a Washington institution, he can apply for a writ of *habeas corpus*—and he stands an almost one hundred percent chance of being released."

“Why’s that so troublesome?” I asked.

“Because,” Lucius said, as Kreizler attempted to get a telephone line through to Washington, “so many mental patients in that city, especially at St. Elizabeth’s, have been sent there from other parts of the country.”

“Oh?” Now it was Marcus’s turn to draw near. “Why’s that?”

Lucius took a deep breath, his own excitement mounting. “Because St. Elizabeth’s is the receiving hospital for soldiers and sailors who’ve been judged unfit for military duty. Unfit—because of mental illness.”

The slow, drifting way in which Sara, Marcus, and I had been approaching Lucius and Kreizler now became something of a stampede. “It didn’t occur to us at first,” Lucius explained, shying away from our advance, “because there’s no mention of the man’s background in the letter. Only descriptions of his appearance and his symptoms—delusions of persecution and persistent cruelty. But if he did, in fact, see military service and was sent to St. Elizabeth’s—well, there’s a chance, a slim but real chance that it’s—” Lucius paused, seemingly afraid to say the word: “him.”

The idea seemed a sound one; but our mood of hopefulness was fairly well dashed by Kreizler’s ’phone call. After being kept waiting for quite a while, he did finally manage to get the superintendent of St. Elizabeth’s on the line, but the man treated Laszlo’s request for further information with the utmost contempt. Apparently, he knew all about the notorious Dr. Kreizler and felt the way many asylum superintendents did about my friend. Kreizler asked if there wasn’t some other member of the hospital staff who could look into the matter, to which the superintendent replied that his staff was severely overworked and had already lent “extraordinary” assistance in this matter. If Kreizler wanted to rummage through the hospital’s records, he could damned well come down to Washington and do so himself.

The difficulty was that Kreizler couldn’t just drop everything and shoot off to the capital—none of us could, for we were just a couple of days away from Pentecost. There was nothing to do but put the trip to Washington at the top of the list of things to be attended to after our next all-night vigil, then swallow our excitement and patiently focus on the immediate job to be done. Given the poor results that had attended our Ascension Day efforts, however, I couldn’t help feeling that such focus was going to prove somewhat difficult to achieve.

Nonetheless, when Pentecost Sunday (the feast celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles) arrived we all returned to our various nocturnal aeries and waited again for the appearance of our killer. I cannot say what the mood on the other three rooftops was; but for Stevie and myself, up above the Slide, boredom struck early. It being Sunday night fairly little noise echoed up from Bleecker Street, while the occasional grunt and hiss of the Sixth Avenue Elevated nearby evolved in quality from monotonous to somewhat lulling. Before long it was all I could do to stay awake.

At about twelve-thirty I glanced over to see Stevie quietly laying out a deck of cards in thirteen piles on the tar in front of him. “Solitaire?” I whispered.

“Jewish faro,” he answered, giving the criminal class’s name for the game of stuss, a particularly shady and complicated method of bilking suckers that I’d never been able to comprehend. Seeing a chance to fill this void in my gambling education, I crept over to sit by Stevie, and he quietly tried for the better part of an hour to explain the game to me. I absorbed none of it; and finally, frustrated as well as bored, I stood up and looked out at the city around us.

“This is useless,” I decided quietly. “He’s never going to show up.” I turned to look across Cornelia Street. “I wonder how the others are doing.”

The building that housed the Black and Tan—where Cyrus and Lucius had been posted—was just across the way, and looking beyond its cornice I could see the back of Lucius’s balding pate reflected in the moonlight. I laughed quietly and called it to Stevie’s attention.

“He oughta wear a hat,” Stevie laughed. “If we can see it, so can other people.”

“True,” I answered; and then, as the balding head moved to another spot on the roof and finally disappeared, my face screwed up in puzzlement. “Has Lucius *grown* since we started this investigation?”

“Must’ve been standing on the dividing wall,” Stevie answered, going back to his cards.

In such innocuous ways are disasters presaged. It was another fifteen minutes before a series of urgent shouts that I recognized to be Lucius’s started to blare across Cornelia Street; and when I looked over, the urgency and fear in the detective sergeant’s face were enough to make me immediately grab Stevie by the collar and head

for the staircase. It was apparent even to my tired, bored brain that we'd had our first contact with the killer.

CHAPTER 26

Once on the sidewalk, Stevie and I dispatched our waiting contingent of street arabs to fetch Kreizler, Roosevelt, Sara, and Marcus, then sped across Cornelia Street to the Black and Tan. Making straight for the structure's front door, we ran headlong into Frank Stephenson, who had been drawn out of his infamous brothel by Lucius's shouts for assistance. Like most men of his profession, Stephenson employed plenty of muscle, and several of these thugs were standing on the stoop with him, blocking our entrance. I was in no mood, however, to go through the usual game of threat and counterthreat with them: I simply said that we were on police business, that there was a police officer on the roof, and that the president of the Board of Police Commissioners would be arriving soon. That litany was enough to get Stephenson and his boys out of the way, and in seconds Stevie and I were on the roof of the building.

We found Lucius crouching over Cyrus, who had suffered a nasty blow to the skull. A small pool of blood glittered on the tar beneath Cyrus's head, while his half-open eyes were rolled frightfully up into their sockets and his mouth was producing strained wheezing sounds. Ever cautious, Lucius had brought some gauze bandages along with him, and was now carefully wrapping them around the top of Cyrus's head, in an effort to stabilize what was at the very least a bad concussion.

"It's my fault," Lucius said, before Stevie and I had even asked any questions. Despite his firm concentration on what he was doing, there was deep remorse in Lucius's voice. "I was having trouble staying awake, and went for coffee. I forgot that it was Sunday—it took longer to find some than I'd anticipated. I must've been gone for more than fifteen minutes."

“Fifteen minutes?” I said, running to the back of the roof. “Could that have been enough time?” Looking down into the rear alleyway, I saw no signs of activity.

“I don’t know,” Lucius answered. “We’ll have to see what Marcus thinks.”

Marcus and Sara arrived a few minutes later, followed soon by Kreizler and Theodore. Pausing just long enough to check on Cyrus’s condition, Marcus produced a magnification lens and a small lantern, then quickly began searching various parts of the rooftop. Explaining that fifteen minutes would indeed have been enough time for a capable climber to get down and up the side of the building, Marcus kept rummaging around until he found some rope fibers that might or might not have been evidence of our killer’s presence. The only way to be sure was to find out from Frank Stephenson if any of his “workers” were missing. Backed up by Theodore, Marcus headed downstairs, while the rest of us stood around Lucius and Kreizler, who were both now at work on Cyrus’s head. Kreizler sent Stevie to tell the street arabs to fetch an ambulance from nearby St. Vincent’s Hospital, although there was some question as to whether it was safe to move a man in Cyrus’s condition. After bringing him round with ammonia salts, however, Kreizler was able to learn that Cyrus still had feeling and movement in all his limbs, and Laszlo therefore felt certain that the bumpy ride up Seventh Avenue to the hospital, while uncomfortable, would do no further damage.

Kreizler’s concern for Cyrus’s safety was pronounced; before letting him slip back into semiconsciousness, however, Laszlo wafted more of the ammonia salts under his nose and urgently asked if he’d been able to see who’d struck him. Cyrus only shook his head and moaned pitiably, at which Lucius said that it was useless for Kreizler to press the issue: the wound on Cyrus’s head indicated that he’d been struck from behind, and had therefore probably never realized what was happening.

It took another half an hour for the ambulance from St. Vincent’s to arrive, enough time for us to learn that, in fact, a fourteen-year-old boy from the Black and Tan was not in his assigned room. The details were of a sort that was by now grimly familiar to all of us: the missing youth was a recently arrived German immigrant named Ernst Lohmann, who had not been seen leaving the premises and who had been working out of a chamber that had a window which opened onto the rear alley. According to Stephenson, the boy had requested the room especially that day; so in all likelihood the killer had planned

the exodus in advance with his unwitting victim, though how long ago—hours or days—it was impossible to say. I'd told Marcus before he went downstairs that the Black and Tan was not particularly known for offering male whores who dressed up like women, and he'd questioned Stephenson on this point. Sure enough, the one boy in the house who handled such requests was Ernst Lohmann.

Finally, two uniformed ambulance attendants from St. Vincent's appeared on the roof, carrying a folding stretcher. As they bore Cyrus carefully downstairs and then loaded him into the solemn black ambulance, which was pulled by an equally forbidding horse with blood-red eyes, I realized that a terrible death watch was now beginning: not for Cyrus, who though badly hurt would almost certainly recover fully, but for young Ernst Lohmann. After the ambulance had driven off, with Kreizler and Sara accompanying Cyrus to the hospital, Roosevelt turned to me, and I could see he'd reached the same conclusion.

"I don't care what Kreizler says, John," Theodore announced, setting his jaw and balling his fists. "This is a race against time and savagery now, and I'm going to use the force under my command." I followed him as he rushed to Sixth Avenue to find a hansom. "The Ninth Precinct is closest. I shall make all arrangements from there." He caught sight of an empty rig, and approached it. "We know the basic pattern—he'll be making for the waterfront. I'll have detachments search every foot of—"

"Roosevelt—wait." I managed to grab his arm and pull him to a halt just as he was getting into the cab. "I understand your feelings. But for heaven's sake, don't reveal any details to your men."

"Not reveal—good God, John!" His teeth started to click louder and his eyes danced with rage behind the spectacles. "Do you understand what's happening? Why, at this very moment—"

"I know, Roosevelt. But it won't help things to let the whole force in on it. Just say that there's been a kidnapping, and that you have reason to suspect the criminals are trying to leave the city by boat or by bridge. It's the best way to handle it, please believe me."

Theodore took a big, strong breath into his broad chest, then nodded once. "Perhaps you're right." He slammed one fist into the other hand. "Blast all, this damned interference! But I'll do as you say, John—provided you'll stand aside and let me get to it!"

With a sharp crack of his horsewhip Roosevelt's cabbie commenced a fast trip up Sixth Avenue, and I returned to the front of the Black and Tan. There a small and already surly crowd had gathered and was being told the details of the evening's activities by Frank Stephenson. Technically speaking, the Black and Tan was in the territory of the Hudson Dusters, and Stephenson owed no allegiance to Paul Kelly; but the two men did know each other, and the job Stephenson did exciting that little crowd outside his house that night made me very suspicious that Kelly had foreseen the possibility that one of Stephenson's boys might be snatched or killed, and had paid him handsomely to make the most of such an event. Stephenson let off a lot of angry statements to the effect that the police had been on the scene and had exercised neither caution nor diligence. The victim was too poor, he said, and entirely too foreign to warrant police interest; if people in such neighborhoods as their own wanted to prevent these kinds of things, they'd have to take matters into their own hands. Marcus, of course, had already identified himself to Stephenson as a police officer; and as the crowd's mood grew uglier and an increasing number of threatening glances were thrown our way, the Isaacsons, Stevie, and I decided to retreat to our headquarters, where we would try to stay abreast of events through the rest of the night by telephone.

Such proved a lot trickier than it sounded. There was no one for us to ring up—Theodore would never take a call from us while he was in the company of regular police officers—and no one was likely to get in touch with our headquarters. At about four we did have word from Kreizler, who said that he and Sara had gotten Cyrus comfortably settled in a private room at St. Vincent's and would be returning to our headquarters soon. Other than that, however, there was profound silence. Lucius, though very much relieved by Kreizler's call, nonetheless felt profoundly guilty about all that had happened, and paced the floor rather frantically. Indeed, had it not been for Marcus I think we might all have slowly gone mad sitting there with nothing to do. But the taller Isaacson decided that if we couldn't lend our bodies to the search we could at least use our minds, and, pointing to the large map of Manhattan, he suggested that we try to anticipate where the killer would go this time to perform his vicious ritual.

Yet even if we hadn't been distracted by the thought that events were proceeding without our being able to affect them, I doubt that we would have gotten very far in this endeavor. True, we had a couple of fairly solid starting points: first, the assumption that the killer's deep hatred of immigrants had resulted in the disposal of bodies at Castle Garden and the Ellis Island ferry; and, second, the belief that his preoccupation with the cleansing power of water had caused him

to select two bridges and a water tower as sites for the other murders. But how could we extrapolate from these elements sufficiently to guess what site he would choose next? One suggestion was that he'd return to another bridge; and, if we assumed that he wouldn't repeat himself in this regard, we were left with either the old High Bridge over the East River at the northern end of Manhattan (an aqueduct that carried Croton Reservoir water into the city) or the nearby Washington Bridge, which had opened a few years earlier. Marcus, however, realized that the killer probably knew that his pursuers were gaining ground on him. Based on the timing of his attack on Cyrus, for example, it seemed certain that it had been *he* who had put *us* under surveillance earlier in the evening rather than vice versa. A man who was paying that kind of attention to his antagonists' activities would likely guess that we were anticipating his return to a favored type of locale and go elsewhere. For Marcus's money, it was the killer's hatred of immigrants that offered the best chance of revealing the probable next murder site; and, following this line of reasoning, the detective sergeant argued that the man would head for someplace like the docks belonging to those steamship lines that packed huge numbers of desperate foreigners into the lower decks of their vessels and brought them to America.

When we finally did get an answer to this deadly conundrum, it was so obvious as to make all of us feel quite ashamed. At about four-thirty, just as Kreizler was walking into our headquarters, Sara telephoned from Mulberry Street, where she'd gone to find out what was happening.

"They've had a message from Bedloe's Island," she said, as soon as I'd picked up the earpiece. "One of the night guards at the Liberty statue—he's found a body." My heart sank, and I said nothing. "Hello?" Sara said. "Are you on the line, John?"

"Yes, Sara. I'm here."

"Then listen carefully, I can't talk long. There's already a pack of senior officers getting ready to head out there. The commissioner's going with them, but he's told me we mustn't show ourselves. He says all he can do is try to prevent any coroners from examining the body before it's sent to the morgue. He'll try to get us in to see it there."

"But the crime scene, Sara—"

"John, please don't be thickheaded. There's nothing anyone can do. We had our chance tonight and we botched it. Now we've got to get

what we can, when we can, at the morgue. In the meantime—" Suddenly I heard loud voices in the background on the other end of the line: one of them I recognized as Theodore, another was unquestionably Link Steffens, and then there were several others I couldn't place. "I've got to ring off, John. I'll be there as soon as I've had word from the island." With a click she was gone.

I gave the others the details, after which it took several minutes for everyone to absorb the fact that despite our weeks of research and days of preparation we'd been unable to prevent another murder. Lucius, of course, took it especially hard, believing himself responsible now not only for a friend's cracked skull but for a boy's death. Marcus and I tried to be sympathetic, but nothing we could say would console him. Kreizler, on the other hand, took a very unemotional line, and told Lucius that since the killer had been observing our efforts there was little doubt that he would eventually have found some way to stage a successful attack, if not on that night then on another. We were lucky, Laszlo declared, that Cyrus's concussion had been the full extent of our casualties—Lucius could also have been laid out on that rooftop, the victim of more than just a nasty knock on the head. There was no time for self-recrimination, Kreizler concluded; Lucius's keen mind and expertise, undiluted by guilt, were sorely needed. This little speech seemed to mean a great deal to Lucius, as much for its author as for its content, and he was soon composed enough to join our efforts to tabulate what, if anything, we'd learned that night.

Every move the killer had made confirmed our theories concerning his nature and methods—but the most important aspect of his behavior, so far as Kreizler was concerned, was his attention to our efforts and his attack on Cyrus. Why had he chosen to steal Ernst Lohmann away when he knew that we were watching? And, once committed to such a dangerous course of action, why had he only knocked Cyrus unconscious instead of killing him? The man was, after all, already certain to go to the gallows, if caught, and he could only hang once. Why take the chance that Cyrus might put up a fight, get a glimpse of his attacker during it, and then live to tell us about it? Kreizler wasn't at all sure that we could answer these questions definitely; but it was at least clear that the man had enjoyed the evening's sense of heightened risk. And since he knew that we were getting closer to him, perhaps letting Cyrus live was his way of urging us on: a defiant challenge, as well as a desperate plea.

Important as all this no doubt was, I could not keep my mind from wandering, as Kreizler spoke, to thoughts of what had occurred on Bedloe's Island that night. Beneath Bartholdi's great statue—which

symbolized freedom to so many but was now, in my mind, an ironic emblem of our killer's slavery to a murderous obsession—another boy had met a terrible and undeserved end. I tried to stifle the vague but powerful image of a youth I'd never seen, bound and on his knees beneath Lady Liberty, trusting fully in the man who was about to wring his neck, and then feeling sudden, brief, all-consuming horror at the realization that he had given his trust unwisely and was going to pay the fullest possible price for his mistake. Then, in rapid succession, other pictures flashed across my mind: first the knife, that fearsome instrument created to meet the dangers of a world very unlike New York; then the long, slow, careful movements of that blade through flesh, and the sharp, mean chops at the limbs; the blood, no longer propelled by the heart, flowing out onto the grass and rocks in leisurely, thick streams; and the sickening grind and squeak of sharp steel against the ocular orbits of the skull…There was nothing that resembled justice or humanity in it. Whatever Ernst Lohmann's way of making a living, whatever his error in trusting a stranger, the penalty was too severe, the price too abominably high.

When my attention returned to the ongoing conversation, I heard Kreizler hissing in frustrated urgency:

"Something—there's got to be *something* new that we've learned tonight."

Neither Marcus, Lucius, nor I spoke; but Stevie, who was glancing at each of us uncertainly, seemed to have something to say, and finally piped up with: "Well, there is one thing, Doctor." Kreizler turned to him expectantly. "He's losing his hair."

And then I remembered the head that we'd thought belonged to Lucius but which had sat atop a body far too tall to be the detective sergeant's. "That's right," I said. "We saw him—good Christ, Stevie, for that one moment we were *looking* at him!"

"Well? *Well?*" Kreizler demanded. "Surely you noticed something else."

I looked to Stevie, who only shrugged. Tearing my own memory of that one instant apart like a demon, I sought a forgotten detail, one overlooked moment when I'd clearly seen…nothing. The back of a balding head. That was all that had been visible.

Kreizler sighed in great disappointment. "Balding, eh?" he said, as he scratched the word on the chalkboard. "Well, I suppose it's more

than we knew yesterday."

"It doesn't seem much," Lucius said. "Measured against a boy's life."

A few minutes later Sara finally telephoned again. The body of Ernst Lohmann was on its way to the morgue at Bellevue. The guard who'd found it, naturally, had witnessed no part of the killing, but had heard a sound just before he spotted the dead boy that could have been a steam launch drawing away from the island. Roosevelt had told Sara that he needed some time to get rid of the police officers that were with him; he thought that if we were to meet him at Bellevue at six-thirty he could make sure that we would be allowed to examine the body without interference. That left just over an hour; I decided to go home, bathe, and change my clothes before joining the others at the morgue.

I arrived at Washington Square to find my grandmother, thankfully and remarkably, still asleep. Harriet was up and about, though, and she offered to draw my bath. As she scurried up the stairs, I remarked on my grandmother's sound slumber.

"Yes, sir," Harriet said. "Ever since the news came she's been much easier in her mind."

"The news?" I said, in tired confusion.

"Sure you've heard, sir? About that horrible Dr. Holmes—it was in all the papers yesterday. I believe we still have the *Times* in the nook, if you'd like me to—"

"No, no," I said, stopping her as she came back down the stairs. "I'll get it. If you'll just draw the bath, Harriet, I'll be your servant for a lifetime."

"Hardly necessary, Mr. John," she answered, going up again.

I found the previous day's *Times* in the copper and glass nook next to my grandmother's favorite chair. The story was blazoned across the front page: HOLMES COOL TO THE END. The infamous "torture doctor" had been dispatched on a Philadelphia gallows, after confessing without remorse to the murder of twenty-seven additional people, mostly women he'd romanced and robbed. The drop had fallen at 10:12 A.M., and twenty minutes later he'd been pronounced dead. As added precautions—against what, the paper did not say—Holmes's coffin had been filled with cement after he'd been laid in it, and then, when the box had been deposited in a ten-foot hole in an unnamed

cemetery, another ton of cement had been poured in over it.

My grandmother still had not stirred when I left the house again for Bellevue; in fact, I later learned from Harriet that she slept until well past ten.

CHAPTER 27

As it turned out, the greatest difficulty with our trip to the morgue early Monday morning did not result from a confrontation with any member of that institution's staff. They were all quite new on the job (having recently replaced a group who'd been fired for selling bodies to anatomists at $150 a head) and too unsure of their authority to go up against Roosevelt. No, our problem was simply getting into the building, for by the time we arrived, another angry mob of Lower East Side residents had formed to demand an explanation as to why their children were still being slaughtered without so much as one suspect being taken into custody. The general air among this crowd was not only angrier than that of the group that'd assembled at Castle Garden, it was also far more indignant. Absent was any mention of Ernst Lohmann's profession or living arrangements (he turned out to have no family that we could ever locate); the youth was pictured as an abandoned innocent left to the mercy of a police department, a city government, and an upper class that did not care how he lived—or, if he died, who was responsible. This much more systematic, not to mention political, representation of Lohmann's plight—and that of the immigrant communities generally—may have been due to the fact that there were a good number of Germans in the crowd; but I suspected that it had far more to do with the ongoing influence of Paul Kelly, although I did not see either him or his brougham anywhere near the morgue as we moved through the crowd around it.

We entered the dreary red-brick building through a black iron door in the back, Sara, the Isaacsons, and I crowding around Laszlo so that no one could see his face. Roosevelt met us just inside the doorway and, after brushing off a pair of attendants who wanted to know our business, led us directly to an examination room. The stench of formaldehyde and decay in this sickening chamber was so strong that

it seemed to be pulling the yellowing paint off the walls. There were tables bearing draped bodies shoved into each corner, and aging, chipped specimen jars full of various pieces of human bodies sat gruesomely on a series of sagging shelves. A large electrical lamp was suspended from the center of the ceiling, and under it was a dented and rusted operating table, which at some point in the distant past must have looked like those Laszlo kept in the basement theater of his Institute. Atop the table was a body covered by a dirty, wet sheet.

Lucius and Kreizler went immediately to the table, and Lucius tore the sheet away—wanting, it seemed to me, to face as quickly as possible the boy for whose death he felt such heavy responsibility. Marcus followed behind them, but Sara and I remained by the door, not wanting to approach the body if we could avoid it. Kreizler produced his little notebook and then the usual recitation began, Lucius listing the injuries that the boy had suffered in a voice that was monotonous yet, paradoxically, passionate:

"Severing of the complete genitalia at their base…Severing of the right hand just above the wrist joint—both the ulna and radius cleanly cut…Lateral lacerations of the abdominal cavity, with attendant damage to the small intestine…Massive damage to the entire arterial system within the thorax, and apparent removal of the heart… Removal of the left eye, attendant damage to the malar bone and supraorbital ridge on that side…Removal of those sections of the scalp covering the occipital and parietal bones of the skull…"

It was a grim roster, all right, and I tried not to listen; but one of the latter items caught my notice. "Excuse me, Lucius," I interrupted, "but did you say removal of the left eye?"

"Yes," came his quick reply.

"The left eye *only*?"

"Yes," Kreizler answered. "The right eye is still intact."

Marcus looked excited. "He must've been interrupted."

"It does seem the most plausible explanation," Kreizler replied. "Probably he detected the guard's approach." Laszlo then pointed at the center of the body. "This business with the heart is new, Detective Sergeant."

Marcus rushed over to the door. "Commissioner Roosevelt," he said, "can you give us another forty-five minutes in here?"

Roosevelt checked his watch. “It would be close. The new warden and his staff usually come in at eight. Why, Isaacson?”

“I need some of my equipment—for an experiment.”

“Experiment? Just what sort of an experiment?” For Theodore, distinguished naturalist that he was, the word “experiment” held almost as much power as “action.”

“There are some experts,” Marcus explained, “who think that, at the moment of death, the human eye permanently records the last image it sees. It’s thought that the image can be photographed, using the eye itself as a sort of lens. I’d like to give it a try.”

Theodore considered the proposition for a moment. “You think the boy may have died looking at his murderer?”

“There’s a chance.”

“And will the next examiner be able to tell you’ve made the attempt?”

“No, sir.”

“Mmm. Quite an idea. All right.” Theodore nodded once definitively. “Fetch your equipment. But I warn you, Detective Sergeant—we are going to be out of here by seven forty-five.”

Marcus bolted off toward the rear door of the building. After his exit Lucius and Kreizler continued to prod and pick at the body, and I eventually sank to the floor, exhausted and disheartened past the point where my legs could support me. Looking up at Sara and hoping to find some sympathy in her face, I saw instead that she was staring at the end of the examination table.

“Doctor,” she finally said quietly, “what’s the matter with his foot?”

Laszlo turned, glanced at Sara, and then followed her gaze to the dead boy’s right foot, which was hanging out over the end of the table. It appeared swollen, and was set on the leg at an odd angle; but as this was nothing compared to the rest of the injuries to the body, it seemed scant wonder that Lucius had missed it.

Kreizler took hold of the foot and examined it carefully. *“Talipes varus,”* he eventually announced. “The boy was clubfooted.”

That caught my interest. “Clubfooted?”

“Yes,” Kreizler answered, letting the extremity drop again.

It was a measure, I suppose, of just how rigorously our minds had been trained in recent weeks that, exhausted as we might have been, we were still able to extrapolate an important set of implications from a fairly common physical deformity that had afflicted this latest victim. We began to discuss these implications at some length, continuing to do so as Marcus returned with his photographic equipment and got ready to take his experimental pictures. Subsequent questioning of those who had known the Lohmann boy at the Black and Tan bore our speculations out, and they are therefore worth mentioning.

Sara suggested that the killer might originally have been drawn to Lohmann because of a kind of identification with the boy’s physical plight. But if Lohmann had been resentful of any mention of his deformity—a strong possibility in a boy of his age and occupation—he would have reacted adversely to such charitable expressions. This reaction would, in turn, have sparked the killer’s usual rage with difficult young men. Kreizler agreed with all this and further explained that the betrayal inherent in Lohmann’s refusal of the killer’s empathy would have stirred a new and even deeper anger in our man. This could well account for the fact that the boy’s heart was missing: the killer had apparently meant to take his mutilations to a new extreme but had been interrupted by the guard. We all knew that this spelled trouble—we were not dealing with a man who would react well to having his intimate moments, sickening as they might be, cut short.

At this point in our discussion Marcus announced that he was ready to begin his experiment, at which Kreizler took a few steps back from the operating table to allow the several pieces of equipment Marcus had brought along to be moved next to the body. After requesting that the overhead electrical bulb be switched off, Marcus asked his brother to slowly lift Ernst Lohmann’s remaining eye out of its socket. When Lucius had complied, Marcus took a very small incandescent lamp and placed it behind the eye, onto which he focused his camera. After exposing two plates to this image, he then activated two small wires, whose ends were bared. He ran these wires into the nerves of the eye, activating the latter, and exposed several more plates. As a final step, he shut off the incandescent lamp and took two images of the unlit but still electrically activated eye. The whole thing seemed quite bizarre (indeed, I later learned that the French novelist Jules Verne had

written of the procedure in one of his outlandish stories); but Marcus was quite hopeful, and as he turned the overhead lamp back on, he expressed his determination to return to his darkroom immediately.

We had packed all of Marcus's equipment up and were nearly ready to depart when I caught sight of Kreizler staring at the Lohmann boy's face, with far less detachment than he'd displayed during his examination of the body. Without myself looking at the mangled corpse, I stood by Laszlo and silently put a hand on his shoulder.

"A mirror image," Kreizler mumbled. At first I thought he was referring to some part of Marcus's procedure; but then I remembered the conversation we'd had weeks ago when we'd said that the condition of the victims' bodies was in a real way a reflection of the psychic devastation that perpetually gnawed at our killer.

Roosevelt moved up beside me, his eyes also fixed on the body. "It's an even worse sight, in this place," he said quietly. "Clinical. Utterly dehumanized…"

"But why this?" Kreizler asked, of no one in particular. "Why just exactly *this*?" He held out a hand to the body, and I knew he was speaking of the mutilations.

"The devil himself only knows," Theodore answered. "I've never seen anything like it, short of a red Indian."

Laszlo and I both froze, and then spun silently on the man. Our stares must have been fairly intense, for Theodore looked momentarily unnerved. "And what's gotten into you two?" he asked, a bit indignantly. "If I may make so bold?"

"Roosevelt," Laszlo said evenly, taking a step forward. "Would you mind repeating what you just said?"

"I've been accused of many things when I speak," Theodore answered, "but never mumbling. I believe I was clear."

"Yes. Yes, you were." The Isaacsons and Sara had drawn close, reading something big in the fire that had swept into Laszlo's previously downcast features. "But what exactly did you mean?"

"I was simply thinking," Roosevelt explained, still a little defensively, "of the only other violence like this that I've ever come across. It was when I was ranching, in the Dakota Badlands. I saw several bodies of white men who'd been killed by Indians, as a

warning to other settlers. The corpses were cut up terribly, much like this one—in an effort, I suppose, to terrify the rest of us."

"Yes," Laszlo said, as much to himself as to Theodore. "That's what you naturally would suppose. But was that, in fact, the purpose of it?" Kreizler began to pace around the operating table, rubbing his left arm slowly and nodding. "A model, he needs a model…It's too consistent, too considered, too—structured. He's modeling it after something…" Checking his silver watch, Laszlo turned back to Theodore. "Would you happen to know offhand, Roosevelt, what time the Museum of Natural History opens its doors?"

"I should hope I would," Theodore answered proudly, "as my father was a founder and I myself am quite involved in—"

"What *time,* Roosevelt?"

"Nine o'clock."

Kreizler nodded. "Excellent. Moore, you'll come with me. As for the rest of you—Marcus, get to your darkroom and let's see if this experiment of yours has produced anything. Sara, you and Lucius go back to Number 808 and get in touch with the War Department in Washington. Find out if they keep any records of soldiers dismissed for mental illness. Tell them we are only interested in soldiers who have served in the Army of the West. If you can't get a telephone line through, send a cable."

"I know a few people at War," Roosevelt added. "If it would be any help."

"It would indeed," Laszlo answered. "Sara, take the names. Go, go, on your way, all of you!" As Sara and the Isaacsons left, taking with them Marcus's equipment, Kreizler came back to Roosevelt and me. "You've realized what we're looking for, Moore?"

"Yes," I said. "But why the museum, exactly?"

"An old friend of mine. Franz Boas. If mutilations such as these do have some kind of cultural significance among Indian tribes, he'll be able to tell us. And should such prove the case, Roosevelt, resounding congratulations will be due you." Kreizler laid the dirty old sheet back over Ernst Lohmann's body. "Unfortunately, I let Stevie take the calash home, which means we'll have to get a cab. Can we drop you anywhere, Roosevelt?"

“No,” Theodore answered, “I’d better stay and cover our tracks. There may be a lot of questions, considering that crowd. But I wish you good hunting, gentlemen!”

The number of disgruntled people outside the morgue had only grown during the time we’d spent examining the Lohmann boy’s remains. Sara and the Isaacsons had apparently gotten through the throng without incident, for we saw no sign of them. Kreizler and I were not so lucky, however. We’d only made it halfway to the main gate of the hospital grounds, with the crowd suspiciously scrutinizing us every step of the way, when our path was blocked by a thickset, square-headed man who carried an old ax handle. The man fixed a cold stare of recognition on Kreizler, and when I turned I saw that Laszlo seemed to know him as well.

“Ah!” the man exclaimed, from deep in the pit of his considerable belly. “So they’ve brought in the famous Herr Doctor Kreizler!” The accent indicated a lower-class German.

“Herr Höpner,” Laszlo answered, in a firm but wary tone that indicated the man might know how to use the ax handle he was carrying. “I’m afraid my colleague and I have urgent business elsewhere. Kindly stand aside.”

“And what, then, of the Lohmann boy, Herr Doctor?” The man Höpner did not move. “Have you something to do with this matter?” A few of the people standing near him muttered echoes to the demand.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about, Höpner,” Kreizler answered coolly. “Please move.”

“No idea, eh?” Höpner began to slap the piece of wood against one palm. “I must doubt that. Do you know the good doctor, *meine Freunden*?” he said to the crowd. “He is the famous alienist who destroys families—who steals children from their homes!” Professions of shock sprang from all sides. “I demand to know what part you have in this matter, Herr Doctor! Did you snatch the Lohmann boy from his parents, just as you snatched my daughter from me?”

“I’ve told you once,” Laszlo said, his teeth starting to grind. “I know nothing about any Lohmann boy. And as for your daughter, Herr Höpner, she *asked* to be removed from your home, because you could not refrain from beating her with a stick—a stick not unlike the one you now hold.”

The crowd drew breath as one, and Höpner's eyes went wide. "What a man does in his own home with his own family is his own business!" he protested.

"Your daughter felt differently about that," Kreizler said. "Now, for the last time—*raus mit dir!*"

It was a command to move, such as one might give to a servant or some other underling. Höpner looked like he'd been spat on. Raising the ax handle he made a move toward Kreizler, but suddenly stopped when one hell of a commotion rose from somewhere behind Kreizler and me. Turning to look over the crowd, I could see a horse's head and the roof of a carriage plowing our way. And along with them I spied a face that I knew: Eat-'Em-Up Jack McManus. He was hanging on to the side of the vehicle, swinging the gargantuan right arm that had made him a formidable force in the prize ring for nearly a decade before he'd quit the fight game to work as a bouncer—for Paul Kelly.

Kelly's elegant black brougham, brass lanterns shining on either side, made its way to where we were standing. The small, sinewy man in the driver's seat cracked his whip in general warning, and the crowd, knowing who was inside the carriage, moved aside and said nothing. Jack McManus jumped down once the wheels had stopped rolling, then looked at the crowd threateningly and straightened his miner's cap. Finally he opened the door of the brougham.

"I suggest you get in, gentlemen!" said an amused voice from within the carriage. Kelly's handsome face soon appeared at the door. "You know how mobs can be."

CHAPTER 28

Ha! Will you look at them!" Kelly was full of glee as he stared back at the crowd during our bumpy flight out of the Bellevue grounds. "The pigs have actually gotten off their knees for once! This ought to make for a few sleepless nights on Mansion Mile, eh, Moore?" I was sitting next to Kreizler across from Kelly in the front half of the brougham. As the gangster turned back around to face us, he pounded his gold-headed stick on the floor and laughed again. "It won't last, of course—they'll be back to packing their kids into sweatshops for a dollar a week before the Lohmann boy's even been boxed. It'll take more than just another dead boy-whore to keep them going. But for now, it does make a glorious picture!" Kelly extended his heavily ringed right hand to Kreizler. "How do you do, Doctor? It's a genuine privilege."

Laszlo took the hand very tentatively. "Mr. Kelly. At least *someone* finds this situation amusing."

"Oh, I do, Doctor, I do—that's why I arranged it!" Neither Kreizler nor I said anything in acknowledgment. "Well, come on, gentlemen, you don't think people like that would stand up for themselves without some urging, do you? A little money in the right places doesn't hurt, either. And I must say, I never expected to run into the eminent Dr. Kreizler in such a situation!" His surprise was transparently false. "Can I drop you gentlemen somewhere?"

I turned to Kreizler. "Saves us the cab fare," I said, to which Laszlo nodded. Then I spoke to Kelly: "The Museum of Natural History. Seventy-seventh and—"

"I know where it is, Moore." Kelly slammed his stick on the roof of the brougham and spoke with harsh authority: "Jack! Tell Harry to

take us to Seventy-seventh and Central Park West. In a hurry!" The sinister charm then returned: "I'm a little surprised to see you here, too, Moore. I thought that after your run-in with Biff you'd lose interest in these murders."

"It'll take more than Ellison to make me lose interest," I declared, hoping to sound more defiant than I felt.

"Oh, I can give you more," Kelly volleyed, jerking his head in Jack McManus's direction. The twinge of apprehension I felt in my gut must have shown in my face, because Kelly laughed out loud. "Relax. I said you wouldn't get hurt as long as you kept my name out of it, and you've played straight. I wish your friend Steffens had your sense. Come to think of it, Moore, you haven't been writing much of *any*-thing lately, have you?" Kelly grinned slyly.

"I'm collecting all the facts before I publish," I said.

"Of course you are. And your friend the doctor's just out stretching his legs, is that it?"

Laszlo shifted in his seat uneasily, but spoke calmly. "Mr. Kelly, as long as you've offered us this remarkably timely ride, I wonder if I might ask you a question."

"Of course, Doctor. It may be hard for you to believe, but I've got a lot of respect for you—why, I even read a monograph you wrote once." Kelly laughed. "*Most* of it, at any rate."

"I'm gratified," Kreizler answered. "But tell me—knowing as little as I do about the murders you speak of, I am, nevertheless, curious as to what possible reason you can have for inflaming, and perhaps endangering, people who have nothing to do with the matter?"

"*Am* I endangering them, Doctor?"

"Surely you realize that such behavior as yours can only lead to wider civil unrest and violence. A great many innocent people are likely to be hurt, and still more jailed."

"That's right, Kelly," I added. "In a town like this what you're starting could get out of hand pretty damned quickly."

Kelly thought about that for a few moments, without ever losing his smile. "Let me ask *you* something, Moore—horse races go off every day, but the average guy only takes an interest in the ones he's betting

on. Why's that?"

"Why?" I said, a bit confused. "Well, because if you've got no stake in it…"

"There you are, then," Kelly interjected, chuckling thoughtfully. "You two gentlemen sit here talking about this city and civil unrest and all of that—but what stake do *I* have in it? What do I care if New York burns to the ground? Whoever's still standing when it's over is going to want a drink and someone to spend a lonely hour with—and I'll be here to supply those items."

"In that case," Kreizler said, "why concern yourself with the matter at all?"

"Because it *riles* me." For the first time, Kelly's face went straight. "That's right, Doctor—it riles me. Those pigs back there get fed all that slop about society by the boys on Fifth Avenue just as soon as they're off the boat, and what do they do? They knock themselves out trying to eat every bit of it. It's a sucker bet, a crooked game, whatever you want to call it, and there's a part of me that just wouldn't mind seeing it go the other way for a little while." His amiable grin suddenly returned. "Or maybe there are deeper reasons for my attitude, Doctor. Maybe you could find something in the—the *context* of my life that would explain it, if you had access to that kind of information." The remark surprised me considerably, and I could see that Kreizler, too, hadn't expected it. There was something very intimidating about Kelly's rough-hewn intellectual agility: a sense that here was a man who could pose a serious threat on any number of levels. "But whatever the reasons," our host went on brightly, glancing out of the carriage, "I'm enjoying this entire affair *immensely*."

"Enough," Kreizler pressed, "to complicate a solution?"

"Doctor!" Kelly feigned shock. "I've got half a mind to be insulted." The gangster flipped open a lid on the head of his cane, revealing a small compartment full of a fine crystalline powder. "Gentlemen?" he said, offering it our way. Laszlo and I both declined. "Gets the system moving at this ungodly hour of the day." Kelly placed some of the cocaine on his wrist and snorted it hard. "I don't like to give the appearance of some cheap burny blower, but I'm not much for the morning. Anyway, Doctor"—he wiped at his nose with a fine silk handkerchief and closed the lid of the cane—"I wasn't aware that there'd *been* any serious attempt to solve this case." He stared straight at Kreizler. "Do you know something I don't know?"

Neither Kreizler nor I answered the question, which prompted Kelly to go on, sarcastically but at length, about the appalling lack of any serious official effort to solve the murders. Finally, the brougham lurched to a fortuitous halt on the west side of Central Park. Laszlo and I stepped out onto the intersection of Seventy-seventh Street, hoping that Kelly would now let the matter drop; but as we got to the curb the gangster poked his head out behind us.

"Well, it's been my honor, Dr. Kreizler," he called. "You, too, scribbler. One final question, though—you don't imagine that the big boys are actually going to let you *finish* this little investigation of yours, do you?"

I was taken too off guard to reply; but Kreizler had evidently adjusted to the situation and replied, "I can only answer that question with another, Kelly—do *you* intend to let us finish?"

Kelly cocked his head and looked at the morning sky. "To tell you the truth, I hadn't thought about that. I didn't think I'd have to. These murders really have been very useful to me, as I say. If you were actually to jeopardize that usefulness—ah, but what am I saying? With what you're up against, you'll be lucky to stay out of jail yourselves." He held his stick up. "Good morning, gentlemen. Harry! Back to the New Brighton!"

We watched the brougham pull away, Eat-'Em-Up Jack McManus still hanging off of it like some kind of overgrown, malevolent monkey, and then turned to head into the Early Renaissance walls and turrets of the Museum of Natural History.

Though not yet three decades old, the museum already housed a first-rate collection of experts and an enormous, bizarre assortment of bones, rocks, stuffed animals, and pinned insects. But of all the prestigious departments that called the castle-like structure home, none was more renowned, or more iconoclastic, than that of anthropology; and I later learned that the man we were on our way to see that day, Franz Boas, was primarily responsible for this.

He was about Kreizler's age, and had been born in Germany, where he'd originally been trained as an experimental psychologist before moving on to ethnology. Thus there were obvious circumstantial reasons why Boas and Kreizler should have become acquainted upon the former's immigration to the United States; but none of these was as important to their friendship as was a pronounced similarity of professional ideas. Kreizler had staked his reputation on his theory of

context, the idea that no adult's personality can be truly understood without first comprehending the facts of his individual experience. Boas's anthropological work represented, in many ways, the application of this theory on a larger scale: to entire cultures. While doing groundbreaking research with the Indian tribes of the American Northwest, Boas had reached the conclusion that history is the principal force that shapes cultures, rather than race or geographical environment, as had been previously assumed. Different ethnic groups behave as they behave, in other words, not because biology or climate forces them to (there were too many examples of groups that contradicted this theory to allow Boas to accept it) but rather because they've been *taught* to. All cultures are equally valid, when seen in this light; and to his many critics who said that certain cultures had obviously made more progress than others, and could thus be considered superior, Boas replied that "progress" was an entirely relative concept.

Boas had thoroughly energized Natural History's Department of Anthropology with his new ideas since his appointment in 1895; and when you strolled through the department's exhibition rooms, as we did that morning, a sense of intellectual vitality and excitement raced through you. Of course, this reaction might have been prompted as much by the sight of the ferocious faces carved into the dozen enormous totem poles that lined the walls; or the large canoe full of plaster Indians—cast from life—who paddled wildly through some imaginary body of water in the center of the main hall; or the case after case of weapons, ritual masks, costumes, and other artifacts that occupied the remaining floor space. Whatever the cause, upon entering those rooms one felt very much like one had stepped out of fashionable Manhattan and into some corner of the globe that those of us who knew no better would immediately have labeled savage.

Kreizler and I found Boas in a cluttered office in one of the museum's turrets overlooking Seventy-seventh Street. He was a small man, with a large, roundish nose, an ample mustache, and thinning hair. In his brown eyes was that same fire of the crusader that marked Kreizler's gaze; and the two men shook hands with a warmth and vigor that is only shared by truly kindred spirits. Boas was in a somewhat harassed state: he was preparing a massive expedition to the Pacific Northwest, to be paid for by the financier Morris K. Jesup. Kreizler and I therefore had to state our case quickly. I was somewhat shocked by the complete candor with which Kreizler revealed our work; and the story gave Boas a shock of his own, to judge by the way he stood up, looked sternly at the two of us, and then firmly closed the door to his office.

“Kreizler,” he said, in an accented voice that was as definitive as Laszlo’s, if slightly gentler, “do you have any idea of what you’re exposing yourself to? Should this become known, and should you fail—the risk is atrocious!” Boas threw his arms up and went for a small cigar.

“Yes, yes, I know, Franz,” Kreizler answered, “but what would you have me do? These are children, after all, however outcast and unfortunate, and the killings will go on. Besides—there are enormous possibilities, should we *not* fail.”

“I can understand a *journalist* getting involved,” Boas railed on, nodding at me as he lit his cigar. “But your work, Kreizler, is important. You are already distrusted by the public as well as by many of your colleagues—should this go badly you will be utterly ridiculed and dismissed by them!”

“As always you are not listening to me,” Kreizler answered indulgently. “You might assume that I’ve been over such considerations many times in my own mind. And the fact of the matter is that Mr. Moore and I are pressed for time, as are you. Therefore, I must ask bluntly—can you help us or not?”

Boas puffed away and scrutinized us both carefully, shaking his head. “You want information on the Plains tribes?” Laszlo nodded. “All right. But one thing is *strengt verboten*—” Boas pointed a finger at Kreizler. “I will not have you saying that the tribal customs of such people are responsible for the behavior of a murderer in this city.”

Laszlo sighed. “Franz, please—”

“Oh, about you I have little doubt. But I know nothing of these people you are working with.” Boas eyed me again, more than a little suspiciously. “We already have enough trouble changing the public view of the Indians. So you must pledge that to me, Laszlo.”

“I pledge it for my colleagues as well as for myself.”

Boas grunted once disdainfully. “Colleagues. I’m certain.” He began shuffling papers on his desk in annoyance. “My own knowledge of the tribes in question is insufficient. But I have just hired a young man who will be able to help you.” Rising and crossing to the door quickly, Boas pulled it open and shouted at a secretary: “Miss Jenkins! Where is Dr. Wissler, please?”

“Downstairs, Dr. Boas,” came a reply. “They’re installing the

Blackfoot exhibit."

"Ah." Boas returned to his desk. "Good. That exhibit's already late getting in place. You'll have to talk to him down there. Don't be deceived by his youth, Kreizler. He's come a long way in just a few years, and seen a great deal." Boas's tone softened as he came around to Laszlo and extended his hand again. "Much like some other distinguished experts I've known."

The two men smiled at each other briefly, but Boas's face went straight with suspicion once more as he shook my hand and then showed us out of his office.

After trotting quickly downstairs, we passed back through the hall that contained the large canoe, then asked a guard for directions. He indicated another exhibition room, the door of which was locked. Kreizler rapped on it a few times, but there was no response. We could hear banging and voices within, and then a series of wild, rather chilling whoops and cries such as one might indeed have heard on the western frontier.

"Good God," I said, "they're not going to put live Indians on display, are they?"

"Don't be ridiculous, Moore." Kreizler pounded on the door again, and finally it opened.

Facing us was a curly-haired young man of about twenty-five with a small mustache, a cherub's face, and dancing blue eyes. He wore a vest and tie, and a very professional pipe was sticking out of his mouth; but on his head was an enormous and rather frightening war bonnet, composed of what I assumed were eagle's feathers.

"Yes?" the young man said, with a very engaging grin. "Can I help you?"

"Dr. Wissler?" Kreizler said.

"Clark Wissler, that's right." The man suddenly realized he was wearing the war bonnet. "Oh, I beg your pardon," he said, removing it. "We're installing an exhibit, and I'm particularly concerned about this piece. You're—"

"My name is Laszlo Kreizler, and this is—"

"*Doctor* Kreizler?" Wissler said hopefully, opening the door further.

“That’s right. And this—”

“This is a real pleasure, is what this is!” Wissler held out his hand and shook Kreizler’s energetically. “An honor! I believe I’ve read everything you’ve written, Doctor—although you really ought to write more. Psychology needs more work like yours!”

As we entered the large room, which was in near-total disarray, Wissler went on in this vein, pausing only briefly to shake my hand. It seemed that he, too, had originally trained in psychology before moving on to anthropology; and even in his current work, he focused on the psychological aspects of different cultures’ value systems, as expressed through their mythologies, artwork, social structures, and the like. This was a fortunate circumstance, for after we drew away from a group of workmen and into a deserted corner of the large room to tell Wissler in confidence of our work, he expressed even stronger concern than had Boas about the potential effects of tying such abominable acts as our killer’s to any Indian culture. When Kreizler gave him the same assurances he’d given Boas, however, Wissler’s unbridled admiration for Laszlo allowed trust to flourish. The fellow reacted to our thorough description of the mutilations involved in the murders with quick and penetrating analysis, of a kind I’ve rarely heard from one so young.

“Yes, I can see why you’ve come to us,” he said. Still carrying the war bonnet, he looked around for a place to lay it, but saw only construction rubble. “I’m sorry, gentlemen, but—” He slipped the bonnet back on his head. “I really must keep this clean until the display is ready. So—the mutilations you’re describing, or at least some of them, do bear a resemblance to acts that have been committed on the bodies of dead enemies by various tribes on the Great Plains—most notably the Dakota, or Sioux. There are important differences, however.”

“And we shall get to those,” Kreizler said. “But what of the similarities—why are such things done? And are they done only to dead bodies?”

“Generally,” Wissler answered. “Despite what you may have read, the Sioux don’t show a marked propensity for torture. There are some mutilation rituals, certainly, that involve the living—a man who can prove that his wife has been unfaithful, for example, can cut her nose off to mark her as an adulteress—but such behavior is very strictly regulated. No, most of the terrible things you’ll come across happen to enemies of the tribe who are already dead.”

"And why to them?"

Wissler relit his pipe, being careful to keep the match away from the eagle's feathers. "The Sioux have a very complex set of myths concerning death and the spirit world. We're still collecting data and examples and trying to comprehend the entire fabric of their beliefs. But basically, each man's *nagi,* or spirit, is gravely affected not only by the way in which the man dies, but by what happens to his body immediately after death. You see, the *nagi,* before embarking on its long journey to the spirit land, lingers near the body, for a time—preparing for the trip, as it were. The *nagi* is allowed to take whatever useful implements the man possessed in life, in order to help him on the journey, and to enrich his afterlife. But the *nagi* also assumes whatever form the body was in at the time of death. Now, if a warrior killed an enemy he admired, he wouldn't necessarily mutilate his body, because, according to another part of the myth, that dead enemy must serve the warrior in the spirit land—and who wants a mutilated servant? But if the warrior truly hated his enemy, and didn't want him to enjoy all the pleasures of the spirit land, then he might do some of the things you're talking about. Castration, for instance—because male spirits can copulate with female spirits in the Sioux vision of the afterlife without the female spirits becoming pregnant. Cutting off the dead man's genitals, obviously, means he won't be able to take advantage of that very appealing aspect of the spirit land. There are also games and contests of strength—a *nagi* without a hand, or without a vital organ, can't expect to do well in them. We've seen many examples of mutilations like that on battlefields."

"And what about the eyes?" I asked. "The same thinking, in that area?"

"The eyes are somewhat different. You see, the *nagi*'s journey to the spirit world involves a very perilous test: he must cross a great mythical river on a very narrow log. If the *nagi* is afraid of this test, or fails it, he must return to our world and wander forever as a lost and forlorn ghost. Of course, a spirit who can't see stands no chance of making the great trip, and his fate is preordained. The Sioux don't take this lightly. There are few things they fear more than being lost in this world in the afterlife."

Kreizler was recording all this in his little notebook, and began to nod as he got this last concept down. "And the differences between the Sioux mutilations and what we've described?"

"Well…" Wissler smoked and puzzled. "There are some larger

issues, as well as some details, that set the examples you're giving me apart from Sioux customs. Most importantly, there's the injury to the buttocks, and the claim to cannibalism. The Sioux, like most Indian tribes, are horrified by cannibalism—it's one of the things they disdain most about whites."

"Whites?" I said. "But we're not—well, let's be fair, we're not cannibals."

"Not usually," Wissler answered. "But there have been a few notable exceptions that the Indians know about. Remember the Donner party of settlers, in 1847? They got trapped for months without food in a snowbound mountain pass—and some of them ate each other. Made for good stories among the western tribes."

"But"—I felt the need to protest further—"well, hang it, you can't base your judgment of an entire culture on what a few people do."

"Of course you can, Moore," Kreizler said. "Remember the principle we've established for our killer: because of his past experience, his early encounters with a relatively small number of people, he has grown to view the entire world in a distinctive fashion. We may call it a mistaken fashion, but, given his past, he cannot do otherwise. It's the same principle here."

"The western tribes haven't had contact with a very flattering cross section of white society, Mr. Moore," Wissler agreed. "And then there are miscommunications that back up those original impressions. When the Sioux leader Sitting Bull was dining with some white men several years back, for example, he was served pork—which he, never having seen such meat, but having heard the story of the Donner party, immediately assumed was white human flesh. That's the unfortunate way in which cultures get to know each other, generally."

"What of the other differences?" Kreizler asked.

"Well, there's the stuffing of the genitals into the mouth—that's gratuitous, in a way that wouldn't make sense to the Sioux. You've emasculated the man's spirit already. Stuffing the genitals into his mouth isn't going to serve any practical purpose. But most of all, there's the fact that these victims are children. Kids."

"Now, wait a minute," I said. "Indian tribes have massacred children, we know that."

"True," Wissler agreed. "But they wouldn't commit this kind of

ritual mutilation against them. At least, no self-respecting Sioux would. These mutilations are carried out against enemies that they want to make sure never find the spirit land, or can't enjoy it when they get there. To do this to a child—well, it would be admitting that you considered the child a threat. An equal. It'd be cowardly, and the Sioux are very touchy about cowardice."

"Let me ask you this, Dr. Wissler," Kreizler said, having glanced over his notes. "Would the behavior we've described to you be consistent with someone who had witnessed Indian mutilations but was too ignorant of their cultural meaning to interpret them as anything more than savagery? And who, in imitating them, might think that *more* savagery will make his actions look *more* like an Indian's?"

Wissler weighed the idea and nodded, knocking burnt tobacco from his pipe. "Yes. Yes, that'd be about how I'd see it, Dr. Kreizler."

And then Laszlo got that look in his eyes, the one that said we had to get out, get into a cab, and get back to our headquarters. He pled pressing business to Wissler, who very much wanted to talk further, and promised to return for another visit soon. Then he bolted for the door, leaving me to apologize more fully for the abrupt departure—which, not surprisingly, Wissler didn't seem to mind at all. Scientists' minds may jump around like amorous toads, but they do seem to accept such behavior in one another.

By the time I caught up to Kreizler on the street, he'd already flagged down a hansom and gotten into it. Thinking there was a good chance he'd leave me behind if I didn't hurry, I dashed to the curb and leapt in, closing the doors on our legs.

"Number 808 Broadway, driver!" Laszlo shouted, and then he began to wave his fist. "Do you see, Moore? Do you see? He's been out there, our man, he's witnessed it! He defines such behavior as horrible and dirty—'dirty as a Red Indian'—yet he also considers himself full of filth. He combats those feelings with anger and violence—but when he kills, he only sinks further down, down to a level he despises even more, down to the lowest, most animal behavior he can imagine—modeled on that of Indians, but, in his mind, even more Indian *than* an Indian."

"He's been on the frontier, then," was what it all meant to me.

"He *must* have been," Laszlo answered. "Either as a child or as a

soldier—hopefully we can clear that up through our Washington inquiries. I tell you, John, we may have blundered last night, but today we're closer!"

CHAPTER 29

Closer we may have been, but we were not, sadly, as close as Laszlo hoped. Sara and Lucius, we learned on returning to our headquarters, had been unable to get anywhere with the War Department, despite Theodore's contacts. All information relating to soldiers hospitalized or dismissed from service for reasons of mental distress was confidential and could not be discussed by telephone. A trip to Washington now loomed as doubly important; indeed, all clues seemed, for the moment, to be leading us away from New York, for if our killer had, in fact, either grown up on the western frontier or served in one of the military units that patrolled that region, then someone would have to head out there to see whether or not an evidential trail of any kind existed.

We spent the remainder of the morning researching possible points, both in time and on the map, at which we might begin to look for such a trail. Eventually we came up with two overall areas: Either the killer had, as a child, witnessed the brutal campaigns against the Sioux that had led up to and followed General Custer's death at the Little Big Horn in 1876, or he had participated as a soldier in the brutal repression of dissatisfied Sioux tribesmen that had culminated in the battle of Wounded Knee Creek in 1890. Either way, Kreizler was anxious to have someone make the trip out west immediately: for, as he told us, he now suspected that the murder of the Zweig children had not been the killer's first taste of blood. And if the man had in fact committed murder in the West—either prior to or during his military service—there would have to be some record of the case somewhere. True, such a crime would almost certainly have remained unsolved in the years since its commission; quite probably, it would have been written off as the work of marauding Indians. But there would still be documents relating to it, either in Washington or in some western

administrative office. And even if no such killing had taken place, we would nonetheless need to have operatives out there ready to follow whatever leads were uncovered in the capital. Only by visiting the actual localities involved could we discover exactly what had happened to our man, and thus be able to predict his future moves accurately.

Kreizler planned to make the trip to Washington himself; and when I told him that I still knew a good number of journalists and government workers in that city—including one especially good contact at the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs—he deemed it advisable for me to come along. That left Sara and the Isaacsons, all of whom were eager to make the western trip. Someone, however, had to remain in New York to coordinate our various efforts. After much discussion, it was decided that Sara was the logical choice for this job, since she was still making—and was expected to make—occasional appearances at Police Headquarters on Mulberry Street. Though bitterly disappointed about missing the western journey, Sara had a firm grasp of the overall picture and accepted her assignment with as much grace as possible.

Roosevelt, meanwhile, was the obvious person to put the Isaacsons in touch with guides in the western states, and when we telephoned him about the project he became wildly enthusiastic, threatening to accompany the two detectives himself. We pointed out, however, that the press followed him wherever he went, and especially when he went out west. Tales of his hunting trips and photographs of him wearing his fringed buckskin suit were guaranteed to sell copies of whatever papers and magazines they appeared in, and questions concerning whom he was traveling with and why would naturally be asked. We couldn't afford that kind of publicity. Besides, with the power struggle on Mulberry Street about to enter a new and perhaps decisive phase, the Police Department's main exponent of reform could hardly up and disappear into the wilderness.

The Isaacsons would go on their own, then; and we reasoned that if they left immediately, they could be in place by the time Laszlo and I dug up any useful information to wire them from Washington. It was with some shock, therefore, that Marcus arrived at Number 808 Broadway after developing his eyeball photographs (which turned out to be a resounding failure, Monsieur Jules Verne notwithstanding) and learned that he would be leaving the next morning for Deadwood, South Dakota. From there he and his brother would proceed south to the Pine Ridge Sioux Reservation and Agency, where they would begin to investigate any and all mutilative murders from the last ten

to fifteen years that had not been solved. Meanwhile, I would use my contact at the Bureau of Indian Affairs to pursue the same line of research in Washington. Kreizler, for his part, would press the War Department and St. Elizabeth's Hospital for information concerning western soldiers dismissed for reasons of mental instability, while doing further research on the individual that St. Elizabeth's had written to us about.

By the time we'd finished hammering all this out it was late afternoon, and the weight of a sleepless night was beginning to bear down on all of us quite heavily. In addition, there were domestic arrangements to make, and of course all our packing needed to be done. We decided to cut our day somewhat short. Goodbyes were said all around, but exhaustion obscured the true importance of the moment—indeed, I don't think either of the Isaacsons really comprehended the fact that they were going to get up the following morning and take a train halfway across the continent. Not that Kreizler and I were in much better shape: as Sara left, she announced that she intended to pick us both up the next day in a cab and take us to the station, the near-dead look on each of our faces having caused her to doubt that we could be relied on to rise at all, much less catch a train.

Just as Kreizler and I were walking out the door of Number 808, Stevie appeared, his own strength reconstituted by several hours' sleep. Reminding us that Cyrus had been alone in a hospital room all day, Stevie said that he'd brought the calash and was prepared to drive us to St. Vincent's Hospital to pay our wounded comrade a visit. Weary though we were, neither Laszlo nor I could refuse; and, remembering the appalling quality of food in the average New York hospital, we decided to call Charlie Delmonico and have him order his staff to prepare a really first-rate meal that we could transport to St. Vincent's.

We found Cyrus heavily bandaged and nearly asleep at about six-thirty. He was delighted with the meal, and complained about nothing, even the fact that the nurses in the hospital objected to caring for a black man. Kreizler lit into a couple of hospital administrators about that, but otherwise we passed a very pleasant hour in Cyrus's room, the window of which offered an excellent view of Seventh Avenue, Jackson Square, and the sunset beyond.

It was nearly dark when we stepped back out onto Tenth Street. I told Stevie that we'd mind the calash for a few minutes so that he could go up and say hello to Cyrus, at which the boy eagerly ran into

the hospital. Kreizler and I were about to deposit our creaking bones in the soft leather upholstery of the carriage when an ambulance clattered up at considerable speed and came to a halt next to us. Had I been less exhausted I might have noticed that the ambulance driver's face was not altogether strange to me; as it was, I focused the little attention I could muster on the vehicle's doors, which burst open and spewed forth a second man. I recognized this individual—who looked like anything but a hospital attendant—with an immediate, throbbing pulse of dread.

"What in hell?" I mumbled, as the man stared at me and grinned.

"Connor!" Laszlo said in shock.

The former detective sergeant's toothy gash widened, and then he took a few threatening steps forward. "So you remember me, then? All the better." From under his somewhat ragged jacket he produced a revolver. "Get in the ambulance. Both of you."

"Don't be absurd," Laszlo answered sharply, despite the gun.

I tried to take a different tack, having a far better idea than did Kreizler of whom we were dealing with: "Connor, put the gun away. This is crazy, you can't just—"

"Crazy, is it?" the man replied angrily. "Hardly. I'm just doing my new job. I lost my old one, you might remember. Anyway, I've been told to fetch you two—though I'd just as soon leave you dead on the sidewalk. So *move.*"

Odd how fear can cure exhaustion. I was suddenly aware of a new burst of energy, all of it directed at my feet. But flight was out of the question—Connor was quite serious, I knew, about his willingness to shoot us. So I pulled Kreizler, who struggled and objected all the way, to the rear of the ambulance. As we got in I looked up just long enough to see that the driver of the vehicle was one of the men who'd tried to waylay Sara and me at the Santorellis' flat. Loose ends were beginning to come together.

Connor locked the ambulance door from the outside, then climbed up top with the other man. We careened off at the same hell-bent speed that'd marked their arrival, although it was impossible to tell through the small caged windows in the vehicle's rear door exactly where we were heading.

"Feels like uptown," I said, as we were jostled around the dark

compartment.

"Kidnapped?" Kreizler said, maintaining that irritatingly detached tone that he assumed at times of danger. "Is this someone's very bizarre idea of humor?"

"It's no joke," I said, trying the door but finding it quite solid. "Most cops are only about three steps away from being criminals, anyway. I'd say Connor's taken those steps."

Laszlo was utterly astounded. "One doesn't really know what to say in such a situation. Do you have any particularly gruesome confessions you'd like to make, Moore? I'm not a cleric, of course, but —"

"Kreizler, did you hear what I just said? This is not a joke!" Just then, we whipped around a corner and were thrown with a crash to one side of the ambulance.

"Hmmm," Kreizler noised, pulling himself up and checking for damage. "I begin to see your point."

In another fifteen minutes our wild ride finally came to an end. Whatever neighborhood we were in was very quiet, the stillness broken only by the grunts and curses of our drivers. Connor finally opened the door again, and we spilled out onto what I recognized to be Madison Avenue, in the Murray Hill district. A nearby lamppost bore a marker that read "36th Street," and in front of us stood a very large but tasteful brownstone with two columns on each side of its front door and large bay windows bulging out toward the street.

Kreizler and I looked at each other, instant recognition in our faces. "Well, well," Kreizler said, intrigued and perhaps even a little awed.

I, on the other hand, was nearly flattened. "What in hell?" I whispered. "Why would—"

"Move," Connor said, indicating the front door but staying by the ambulance.

Kreizler glanced at me again, shrugged, and began to climb the front steps. "I suggest we enter, Moore. He's not a man accustomed to waiting."

A very English butler admitted us to Number 219 Madison Avenue, the interior of which reflected the same rare combination—extreme

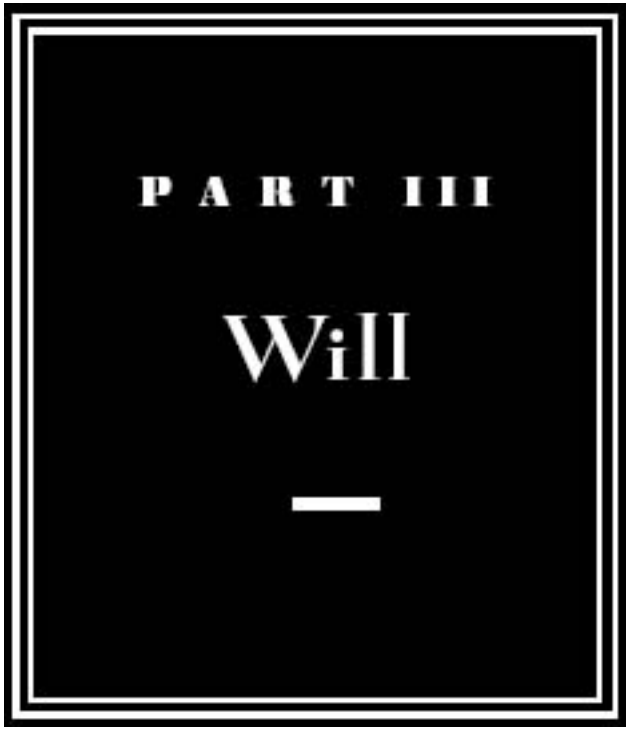
wealth and very fine taste—that marked the outside of the brownstone. Marble flooring met our feet, and a simple yet spacious white stairway wound away into the house's upper floors. Our destination, however, lay directly ahead. We passed splendid European paintings, sculpture, and ceramics—all elegantly and simply displayed, with none of that piling-on effect that families like the Vanderbilts were so appallingly entranced by—and kept moving toward the back of the house. There the butler opened a paneled door that led into a cavernous room that was dimly lit. Laszlo and I stepped inside.

The high walls of the room were paneled with Santo Domingo mahogany that was nearly black; indeed, the room was known, to the staff of the house as well as in New York legend, as "the Black Library." Luxurious carpets covered the floor, and a large fireplace was set into one wall. More European canvases, framed in rich, ornate gold, hung from the walls, and tall bookshelves were crammed with splendid leather-bound rarities gathered during dozens of trips across the Atlantic. Some of the most important meetings in the history of New York—indeed, of the United States—had taken place in this room; and while that fact might have caused Kreizler and me to wonder all the more what we were doing there, the collection of faces that stared at us on our entrance soon made matters clearer.

Sitting on a settee on one side of the fireplace was Bishop Henry Potter, and in a matching piece of furniture on the fireplace's other flank was Archbishop Michael Corrigan. Behind each man stood a priest: Potter's man tall and thin, with spectacles, and Corrigan's short, rotund, and sporting large white sideburns. Before the fireplace stood a man I recognized as Anthony Comstock, the notorious censor of the U.S. Post Office. Comstock had spent twenty years using his congressionally mandated (and constitutionally quite questionable) powers to persecute zealously anyone who dealt in contraceptive devices, pregnancy abortions, ribald literature and photographs, and anything else that met his rather expansive definition of "obscene." Comstock's was a hard, mean face, not surprisingly; yet it wasn't as disconcerting as that of the man who stood next to him. Ex-Inspector Thomas Byrnes had a pair of high, bushy eyebrows that arched over penetrating, all-encompassing eyes; yet at the same time, his enormous, drooping mustache made an accurate reading of his mood and thoughts disturbingly difficult. As we came further into the chamber Byrnes turned to us, and the eyebrows arched enigmatically; then he tilted his head toward an enormous walnut desk that sat in the center of the room. My eyes followed his indication.

Sitting at the desk, going over a few papers and scribbling an occasional note, was a man whose power was greater than that of any financier the world has ever known; a man whose otherwise handsome features were counterbalanced by a nose that had been cracked, swollen, and deformed by *acne rosacea.* You had to be very careful, however, not to stare at that nose openly—you were likely to pay for your morbid fascination in more ways than you could imagine.

"Ah," said Mr. John Pierpont Morgan, looking up from his papers and then standing. "Come in, gentlemen, and let's get this business settled."



The fons et origo *of all reality, whether from the absolute or the practical point of view, is thus subjective, is ourselves. As bare logical thinkers, without emotional reaction, we give reality to whatever objects we think of, for they are really phenomena, or objects of our passing thought, if nothing more. But, as thinkers with emotional reaction, we give what seems to us a still higher degree of reality to whatever things we select and emphasize and turn to WITH A WILL.*

William James,
The Principles of Psychology

Don Giovanni, you invited me to sup with you: I have come.

Da Ponte,
from Mozart's Don Giovanni

CHAPTER 30

I stepped with trepidation toward a pair of luxuriantly upholstered easy chairs that sat near Morgan's desk and across from the fireplace. Kreizler, however, stood rigidly still, answering the financier's hard stare with one of his own.

"Before I sit in your house, Mr. Morgan," Laszlo said, "may I ask if it is your general custom to compel attendance with firearms?"

Morgan's large head snapped around to scowl at Byrnes, who only shrugged in a very unconcerned way. The ex-cop's gray eyes twinkled a bit, as if to say: When you lie down with dogs, Mr. Morgan…

Morgan's head began a slow, slightly disgusted shake. "Neither my custom nor my instructions, Dr. Kreizler," he said, holding out an arm to the easy chairs. "I hope you will accept my apologies. This affair seems to have brought out strong emotions in all who have knowledge of it."

Kreizler grunted quietly, only partially satisfied, and then we both sat down. Morgan also returned to his seat, and brief introductions were made (save of the two priests behind the settees, whose names I never did learn). After that Morgan gave the slightest of nods to Anthony Comstock, who moved his unimposing little figure into the center of the room. The voice that emerged from that frame proved as thoroughly unpleasant as was the face.

"Doctor. Mr. Moore. Let us be frank. We know of your investigation, and for a variety of reasons we want it stopped. If you do not agree, there are certain matters you will be pressed on."

"Pressed on?" I said, my immediate dislike for the postal censor

giving me confidence. “This isn’t a morals case, Mr. Comstock.”

“Assault,” Inspector Byrnes said quietly, looking at the crowded bookshelves, “is a *criminal* charge, Moore. We’ve got a guard at Sing Sing who’s missing a couple of teeth. Then there’s the matter of consorting with known gangland leaders—”

“Come on, Byrnes,” I said quickly. The inspector and I’d had many run-ins during my years at the *Times,* and though he made me very nervous I knew it would be foolish to show it. “Even you can’t call a carriage ride ‘consorting.’”

Byrnes didn’t acknowledge the comment. “Finally,” he went on, “there’s your misuse of the staff and resources of the Police Department…”

“Ours is not an official investigation,” Kreizler replied evenly.

A smile seemed to grow under Byrnes’s mustache. “Cagy, Doctor. But we know all about your arrangement with Commissioner Roosevelt.”

Kreizler showed no emotion. “You have proof, Inspector?”

Byrnes pulled a slender volume from a shelf. “Soon.”

“Now, now, gentlemen,” said Archbishop Corrigan in his affable way. “There’s no reason to leap to adversarial positions.”

“Yes,” Bishop Potter agreed, without much enthusiasm. “I’m sure that an amenable solution can be reached, once we understand one another’s—points of view?”

Pierpont Morgan said nothing.

“What I understand,” Laszlo announced, primarily to our silent host, “is that we have been abducted at gunpoint and threatened with criminal indictment, simply because we have attempted to solve an abominable murder case which has so far baffled the police.” Kreizler pulled out his cigarette case and, removing one of the number within, began to knock it noisily and angrily against the arm of his chair. “But perhaps there are subtler elements of this escapade to which I am blind.”

“Blind you are, Doctor,” Anthony Comstock said, with the annoying grate of a zealot. “But there is nothing subtle about the matter. For

many years I have attempted to suppress the written work of men such as yourself. An absurdly broad interpretation of our First Amendment by so-called public servants has made that impossible. But if you believe for one moment that I will stand by and watch you become actively involved in civic affairs—"

A flash of irritation passed over Morgan's face, and I could see that Bishop Potter caught it. Like a dutiful lackey—for Morgan was one of the Episcopal Church's chief benefactors—the bishop stepped in to cut Comstock off:

"Mr. Comstock has the energy and brusqueness of the righteous, Dr. Kreizler. Yet I fear that your work does unsettle the spiritual repose of many of our city's citizens, and undermines the strength of our societal fabric. After all, the sanctity and integrity of the family, along with each individual's responsibility before God and the law for his own behavior, are twin pillars of our civilization."

"I grieve for our citizens' lack of repose," Kreizler answered curtly, lighting his cigarette. "But seven children that we know of, and perhaps many more, have been butchered."

"But that is a matter for the police, surely," Archbishop Corrigan said. "Why involve such questionable work as your own in it?"

"Because the police can't solve it," I threw in, before Laszlo could answer. These were all fairly standard criticisms of my friend's work, but they were making me a bit hot, nonetheless. "And, using Dr. Kreizler's ideas, we can."

Byrnes let out a barely audible chuckle, while Comstock's face grew red. "I do not believe that is your true motivation, Doctor. I believe you intend, with the help of Mr. Paul Kelly and whatever other atheistic socialists you can find, to spread unrest by discrediting the values of the American family and society!"

If it seems surprising that Kreizler and I neither laughed at this grotesque little man's statements nor rose to physically thrash him, it must be remembered that Anthony Comstock, however harmless his title of Postal Censor might sound, wielded enormous political and regulatory power. Before the end of his forty-year career, he would boast of having driven more than a dozen of his enemies to suicide; and many more than that had their lives and reputations ruined by his persecutory obsessions. Both Laszlo and I knew that while we were a current target, we had not yet entered the ranks of Comstock's

permanent fixations; but if we now pushed him to pay such unbalanced attention to us, we might one day arrive back at our usual places of employment to discover ourselves under federal indictment for some trumped-up violation of public morals. For these reasons I said nothing in reply to his outbursts, while Kreizler only breathed smoke wearily.

"And why," Laszlo finally asked, "should I wish to spread such unrest, sir?"

"Vanity, sir!" Comstock shot back. "To advance your nefarious theories, and gain the attention of an ill-educated and sorely confused public!"

"It seems to me," Morgan said, quietly but firmly, "that Dr. Kreizler already receives more attention from the public than he might prefer, Mr. Comstock." None of the others even attempted to agree or disagree with this statement. Morgan rested his head on one large hand and spoke to Laszlo. "But these are serious charges, Doctor. If they were not, I would hardly have asked that you be brought to this meeting. I take it you are not in league with Mr. Kelly?"

"Mr. Kelly has a few ideas that are not altogether unsound," Kreizler answered, knowing that the comment would further pique the group around us. "But he is essentially a criminal, and I have no use for him."

"I am glad to hear it." Morgan seemed genuinely satisfied with the answer. "And what of these other questions, about the social implications of your work? I must admit that I am not well acquainted with such matters. But as you may know, I am senior warden of St. George's Church, across Stuyvesant Park from your own house." One of Morgan's coal-black eyebrows went up. "I have never seen you among the congregation, Doctor."

"My religious opinions are a private matter, Mr. Morgan," Laszlo replied.

"But surely you realize, Dr. Kreizler," Archbishop Corrigan interrupted cautiously, "that our city's various church organizations are vital to the maintenance of civic order?"

As these words were coming out of Corrigan's mouth, I found myself glancing at the two priests, who continued to stand like statues behind their respective bishops—and suddenly, I got an inkling as to just why we were in that library and talking to that collection of men. This

germ of understanding began to grow as soon as it flashed across my brain, but I said nothing, for comment would only have sparked further disagreement. No, I simply sat back and let my thoughts run on, becoming more comfortable as I recognized that Laszlo and I were in less danger than I'd originally thought.

"'Order,'" Kreizler replied to Corrigan's query, "is a word rather open to interpretation, Archbishop. As to *your* concerns, Mr. Morgan—if what you required was an introduction to my work, I believe I could have suggested an easier route than abduction."

"No doubt," Morgan answered uneasily. "But as we are here, Doctor, perhaps you will favor me with an answer. These men have come to solicit my aid in putting an end to your investigation. I would like to hear both sides of the issue before deciding on a course of action."

Kreizler sighed heavily, but did go on: "The theory of individual psychological context that I have developed—"

"Rank determinism!" Comstock declared, unable to contain himself. "The idea that every man's behavior is decisively patterned in infancy and youth—it speaks against freedom, against responsibility! Yes, I say it is un-American!"

At another annoyed glance from Morgan, Bishop Potter laid a calming hand on Comstock's arm, and the postal censor relapsed into disgruntled silence.

"I have never," Kreizler went on, keeping his eyes on Morgan, "argued against the idea that every man is responsible before the law for his actions, save in cases involving the truly mentally diseased. And if you consult my colleagues, Mr. Morgan, I believe you will discover that my definition of mental disease is rather more conservative than most. As for what Mr. Comstock somewhat blithely calls freedom, I have no argument with it as a political or legal concept. The psychological debate surrounding the concept of *free will,* however, is a far more complex issue."

"And what of your views on the family as an institution, Doctor?" Morgan asked, firmly but without any trace of censure. "I have heard these and many other good men speak of them with great alarm."

Kreizler shrugged, stubbing out his cigarette. "I have very few views on the family as a social institution, Mr. Morgan. My studies have focused on the multitude of sins that can often be concealed by the

family structure. I have attempted to expose those sins, and to deal with their effects on children. I will not apologize for that."

"But why single out families in *this* society?" Comstock whined. "Surely there are regions of the world where far worse crimes—"

Morgan stood suddenly. "Thank you, gentlemen," he said to the postal censor and the churchmen, in a voice that promised hard measures if there was further argument. "Inspector Byrnes will show you out."

Comstock looked a bit nonplussed, but Potter and Corrigan had evidently experienced such dismissal before: they departed the library with remarkable speed. Alone with Morgan, I felt much relieved, and it seemed that Kreizler did, too. For all the man's great and mysterious power (he had, after all, single-handedly arranged the United States government's rescue from financial ruin just one year earlier) there was something comforting in his obvious cultivation and breadth of vision.

"Mr. Comstock," Morgan said as he sat back down, "is a God-fearing man, but there is no talking to him. *You,* on the other hand, Doctor… Though I understand very little of what you have told me, I get the feeling that you are a man with whom I can do business." He straightened his frock coat, dabbed at his mustache, and sat back. "The mood in the city is volatile, gentlemen. More volatile, I suspect, than you realize."

The moment had come, I decided, to share my realizations: "And that's why the bishops were here," I announced. "There's been more trouble in the slums and ghettos. A lot more. And they're worried about their money."

"Their money?" Kreizler echoed in confusion.

I turned to him. "They weren't covering for the murderer. They were never concerned with the murderer. It was the reaction among the immigrants that had them spooked. Corrigan's afraid that they'll get angry enough to listen to Kelly and his socialist friends—angry enough to stop showing up on Sunday and coughing up what little money they have. Basically, the man's afraid he won't get to finish his damned cathedral, and all the other little holy projects he's probably got planned."

"But what about Potter?" Kreizler asked. "You told me yourself that the Episcopals don't have many adherents among the immigrants."

“That’s right,” I said, smiling a bit. “They don’t. But they have something even more profitable, and I’m an ass for not remembering it. Perhaps Mr. Morgan would be willing to tell you”—I turned toward the big walnut desk and found Morgan staring back at me uncomfortably—“who the largest slum landlord in New York is?”

Kreizler took in breath sharply. “I see. The Episcopal Church.”

“There is nothing illegal in any of the Church’s operations,” Morgan said quickly.

“No,” I replied. “But they’d be in a tight spot if those tenement dwellers were to rise up in a mass and demand better housing, wouldn’t they, Mr. Morgan?” The financier turned away silently.

“But I still don’t understand,” Kreizler puzzled. “If Corrigan and Potter are so afraid of the effects of these crimes, why obstruct a solution?”

“We have been told that a solution is impossible,” Morgan answered.

“But why try to frustrate an *attempt*?” Kreizler pressed.

“Because, gentlemen,” said a quiet voice from behind us, “as long as the case is thought to be unsolvable, no one can be blamed for not solving it.”

It was Byrnes again, back in the room without our having heard his approach. The man really was unnerving. “The great unwashed,” he went on, taking a cigar from a case on Morgan’s desk, “will be made to understand that these things happen. It’s no one’s fault. Boys engage in criminal conduct. Boys die. Who kills them? Why? Impossible to determine. And there’s no need to. Instead, you fix the public’s attention on the more basic lesson—” Byrnes struck a match on his shoe and lit his cigar, the tip of which flamed high. “Obey the law in the first place and none of the rest occurs.”

“But damn it, Byrnes,” I said, “we *can* solve it, if you’ll just get out of the way. Why, just last night I myself—”

Kreizler stopped me by grabbing my wrist tightly. Byrnes slowly came over to my chair, leaned down, and let me have a big dose of cigar smoke. “Last night you what, Moore?”

It was impossible not to remember at such a moment that you were

dealing with a man who'd personally beaten dozens of suspected and *de facto* criminals senseless, a style of interrogation that had become known throughout New York and the rest of the country by the name Byrnes himself had given it: "the third degree." All the same, I attempted defiance. "Don't try that strong-arm stuff with me, Byrnes. You've got no authority anymore. You haven't even got your thugs to back you up."

I glimpsed teeth behind the mustache. "You'd like me to call Connor in?" I said nothing, and Byrnes chuckled. "You always had a big mouth, Moore. Reporters. But let's play it your way. Tell Mr. Morgan here how you'll solve the case. Your principles of detection. Explain them."

I turned to Morgan. "Well, it won't make sense to men like Inspector Byrnes, sir, and it may not to you, but—we've adopted what you might call a reverse investigative procedure."

Byrnes laughed out loud. "What you might call ass-backwards!"

Realizing my mistake, I went for another approach: "That is, we start with the prominent features of the killings themselves, as well as the personality traits of the victims, and from those we determine what kind of a man *might* be at work. Then, using evidence that would otherwise have seemed meaningless, we begin to close in."

I knew I was on shaky ground, and was relieved to hear Kreizler chime in at this point:

"There is some precedent, Mr. Morgan. Similar efforts, though far more rudimentary, were made during the Ripper murders in London eight years ago. And the French police are currently seeking a Ripper of their own—they've used some techniques that are not unlike ours."

"The London Ripper," Byrnes called out, "was not apprehended without my hearing about it, was he, Doctor?"

Kreizler frowned. "No."

"And the French police, using their anthropo-hodge-podge—have they made any progress in their case?"

Laszlo's scowl deepened. "Very little."

Byrnes finally did us the decency of looking up from his book. "Quite a pair of examples, gentlemen."

There was a moment of silence, during which I felt our cause to be weakening. Putting new determination into my words, I said, “The fact remains—”

“The fact remains,” Byrnes interrupted, coming back over to us but speaking to Morgan, “that this is an intellectual exercise which offers no hope of solving the case. All these people are doing is giving every person they interview the idea that a solution is possible. As I say, that’s not just useless, it’s dangerous. The only thing the immigrants ought to be told is that they *and* their children had better obey the laws of this city. If they don’t, nobody else can be held responsible for what happens. Maybe they’ll find that point hard to swallow. But this idiot Strong and his cowboy police commissioner will be out before long. And then we’ll be able to bring back the old *force-feeding* techniques. Quickly.”

Morgan nodded slowly, then glanced from Byrnes to Kreizler. “You’ve made your point, Inspector. I wonder if now you’ll excuse us?”

In contrast to Comstock and the churchmen, Byrnes seemed almost amused by Morgan’s curt dismissal: as he left the library he began to whistle lowly. When the paneled door had closed again, Morgan stood up and looked out a window. It almost seemed as though he was making sure Byrnes left his house.

“Can I offer you gentlemen anything to drink?” Morgan said at length. After Kreizler and I both declined, our host took one of the cigars from the case on his desk and lit it, then began slowly to pace the thickly carpeted floor. “I agreed to see the delegation that has just left us,” he announced, “out of deference to Bishop Potter, and because I have no desire to see the recent outbreaks of civil unrest go on.”

“Excuse me, Mr. Morgan,” I said, a bit amazed by his tone. “But have you, or any of the gentlemen who were here, even *discussed* this matter with Mayor Strong?”

Morgan passed a hand before him quickly. “Inspector Byrnes’s point about Colonel Strong is well-taken. I have no interest in dealing with a man whose power is limited by elections. Besides, Strong doesn’t have the mind to deal with a matter of this nature.” Morgan’s heavy, deliberate pacing went on, and Kreizler and I remained silent. The library slowly filled up with thick cigar smoke, and when Morgan finally stood still and spoke again, I could barely see him through the

brownish haze.

“As I see it, gentlemen, there really are only two advisable courses —yours, and that advocated by Byrnes. We must have order. Particularly now.”

“Why now?” Kreizler asked.

“You are probably not in a position to know, Doctor,” Morgan answered carefully, “that we are at a crossroads, both in New York and in the country as a whole. This city is changing. Dramatically. Oh, I don’t simply mean the population, with the influx of immigrants. I mean the city itself. Twenty years ago, New York was still primarily a port—the harbor was our chief source of business. Today, with other ports challenging our preeminence, shipping and receiving have been eclipsed by both manufacture and banking. Manufacture, as you know, requires workers, and other, less fortunate, nations in the world have provided them. The leaders of organized labor claim that such workers are treated unfairly here. But fairly or no, they continue to come, because it is better than what they have left behind. I mark from your speech that you are of foreign extraction yourself, Doctor. Have you spent much time in Europe?”

“Enough,” Kreizler answered, “to take your point.”

“We are not obligated to provide everyone who comes to this country with a good life,” Morgan went on. “We are obligated to provide them with a chance to attain that life, through discipline and hard work. That chance is more than they have anywhere else. That is why they keep coming.”

“Assuredly,” Laszlo answered, impatience beginning to show in his voice.

“We shall not be able to offer such a chance, in future, should our national economic development—which is currently in a state of deep crisis—be retarded by foolish political ideas born in the ghettos of Europe.” Morgan put his cigar down in a tray, went to a sideboard, and poured out three glasses of what turned out to be excellent whiskey. Without asking a second time if Laszlo and I wanted any, he handed two of the glasses to us. “Any events which can be prostituted to serve the purposes of those ideas must be suppressed. That is why Mr. Comstock was here. He believes that ideas such as yours, Doctor, can be so prostituted. Were you to succeed in your investigation, Mr. Comstock believes that your ideas might gain greater credence. Thus

you see—" Morgan took up his cigar again, and drew in an enormous volume of smoke. "You have made yourselves a wide variety of powerful enemies."

Kreizler stood up slowly. "Need we count you among those enemies, as well, Mr. Morgan?"

The pause that followed seemed interminable, for on Morgan's answer hung any hope of our success. Should he decide that Potter, Corrigan, Comstock, and Byrnes were right, and that our investigation represented a range of threats to the status quo in our city that simply could not be tolerated, we might just as well fold our tents and head for home. Morgan could arrange the purchase or sale of anyone and anything in New York, and the interference we'd already experienced would be nothing compared to what we'd meet if he decided to oppose us. Conversely, should he signal to the rest of the city's rich and powerful that our effort was to be, if not actively encouraged, at least tolerated, we could hope to proceed without any more severe interference than that which our opponents had already attempted.

Morgan finally let out a deep breath. "You need not, sir," he said, stamping out his cigar. "As I say, I do not understand all of what you gentlemen have explained to me, about either psychology or criminal detection. But I make it my business to know men. And neither of you strikes me as having the worst interests of society at heart." Kreizler and I each nodded once calmly, belying the enormous relief that was coursing through our veins. "You will still face many obstacles," Morgan went on, in an easier tone than he'd used before. "The churchmen who were here can, I believe, be persuaded to stand aside —but Byrnes will continue to harass you, in an effort to preserve the methods and organization he has spent so many years establishing. And he will have Comstock's support."

"We have prevailed against them so far," Kreizler answered. "I believe we can continue to do so."

"Of course, I can offer you no public support," Morgan added, indicating the library door and walking with us to it. "That would be entirely too—complicated." Meaning that, for all his superior intellectual acumen and personal erudition, Morgan was at heart a true Wall Street hypocrite, one who spoke publicly about God and the family but privately kept his yacht stocked with mistresses and enjoyed the esteem of men who lived by similar rules. He would certainly lose some of that esteem, if he were thought to be in league with Kreizler. "However," he went on, as he walked us to his front

door, “since a quick conclusion to the affair is in everyone’s best interest, if you should find yourselves in need of resources…”

“Thank you, but no,” Kreizler said, as we went out. “It would be best not to have even a cash connection between us, Mr. Morgan. You must consider your position.”

Morgan bridled at the acidity of the comment, and, murmuring a fast “Good evening,” closed the door without shaking hands.

“That was a little gratuitous, don’t you think, Laszlo?” I said as we went down the stairs. “The man was only trying to help.”

“Don’t be so gullible, Moore,” Kreizler snapped. “Men like that are only capable of doing what they perceive to be in their best interests. Morgan’s betting that we’re more likely to find the killer than Byrnes and company are to keep the immigrant population’s anger indefinitely suppressed. And he’s right. I tell you, John, it would be almost worthwhile to fail, simply to observe the consequences to such men.”

I was entirely too exhausted to listen to one of Laszlo’s tirades, and scanned Madison Avenue quickly. “We can catch a cab at the Waldorf,” I decided, seeing none close by.

There was very little activity on the avenue during our descent of Murray Hill, and Laszlo eventually stopped decrying the evils of the group we’d just left. As we walked on, both silence and weariness deepened, and our entire encounter in the Black Library began to take on a rather unreal quality.

“I don’t think I’ve ever been so tired,” I yawned as we reached Thirty-fourth Street. “Do you know, Kreizler, that for just a second when we first met Morgan I thought *he* might actually be the killer?”

Laszlo laughed loud. “As did I! Deformity in the face, Moore—and that nose, that nose! One of the only possible locations for such deformity that we never discussed!”

“Imagine if it had been him. Things are dangerous enough as it is.” We found a hansom outside the ornately elegant Waldorf Hotel, whose sister structure, the Astoria, was just being built at the time. “And they’ll only get more so—Morgan’s right about that. Byrnes is a bad enemy to have, and Comstock strikes me as being flat out of his mind.”

“They can threaten all they like,” Kreizler answered happily as we climbed into a cab. “We know who they are, now, and defense should be an easier matter. Besides, their attacks will grow increasingly difficult. For in the days to come our opponents shall find us mysteriously”—Laszlo splayed his fingers out into the air before him —*“gone.”*

CHAPTER 31

Sara was at the door of my grandmother's house at nine-thirty the next morning, and though I'd gotten better than ten hours of sleep I still felt disoriented and thoroughly worn-out. A copy of the *Times* Sara had tucked under her arm informed me that it was May 26th, and the bright glare of the sun that assaulted me as I went out to Sara's cab stated unarguably that spring was continuing its march toward summer; but I might as well have been on the planet Mars (which, I learned from a semiconscious reading of the front page of the paper, was the object of study for a newly formed group of eminent Boston astronomers, who believed that what they called the "red star of war" was "inhabited by human beings"). Sara got a few good laughs out of my slightly ridiculous condition during the first leg of our cab ride to Kreizler's; but when I started to relate details of Laszlo's and my unexpected trip to Pierpont Morgan's, she became all seriousness.

We found Kreizler sitting in his calash on Seventeenth Street, with Stevie in the driver's seat. I transferred my small bag from the cab to the carriage and then climbed aboard with Sara. Just as we pulled away I looked up to catch sight of Mary Palmer standing on the small balcony outside Kreizler's parlor. She was watching us anxiously, and what looked from a distance like tearstains were glistening on her cheeks. Turning to Laszlo, I saw that he was also looking back at her; and when he turned forward again, a smile came into his face. It seemed an odd reaction to the girl's distress, to say the least. I thought perhaps Sara had something to do with it all, but when I glanced at her I found that she was deliberately staring across the street and into Stuyvesant Park. Irritated by all these new hints of personal complexities among my friends, and incapable at that moment of making any sense of them, I did nothing more than lean back and let

the spring sun bake my face as we clattered east.

Our ride to the Grand Central Depot had not been designed with relaxation in mind, however. On Eighteenth Street and Irving Place Stevie drew to a halt outside a tavern, and Kreizler, taking my bag as well as his own, told Sara and me to accompany him inside. We obeyed, myself with a few grumbles. Moments after we'd entered the dark, smoky place I looked outside to see two other men and a woman, their faces obscured by hats, getting into the calash and driving off with Stevie. Once they'd gotten out of sight Kreizler rushed back out onto the street and flagged down a cab, then waved Sara and me into it. This annoying little exercise, Laszlo explained as we headed uptown again, was designed to frustrate the agents he believed Inspector Byrnes had assigned to shadow us. It was a very clever provision, no doubt, but it only made me impatient to get on our train, where, I hoped, I'd be allowed to go back to sleep.

One more mystery stood between me and sweet repose, however. Sara accompanied us into Grand Central when we arrived, and then to the platform where the Washington train stood in steaming readiness. Kreizler kept peppering her with last-minute instructions about communications and whatnot, as well as with tips on how to handle Stevie while we were gone and what to do with Cyrus once he emerged from the hospital. Then the loud whistle on the train's engine screamed and a conductor's smaller pipe began to wail, signaling us to get on board. I turned away from my companions, expecting some slightly embarrassing farewell scene to take place; all Kreizler and Sara did, however, was shake hands collegially, after which Laszlo dashed past me onto the train. I stood there for a moment with my jaw hanging open, prompting a chuckle from Sara.

"Poor John," she said, giving me a warm hug. "Still trying to sort things out. Don't worry—it'll all be clear, someday. And you mustn't fret too much about your priest theory being wrong. You'll have another idea soon."

With that she shoved me into the train, just as it began to grunt and wheeze out of the station.

Kreizler had engaged a first-class compartment, and after we'd settled into it I immediately stretched out on one seat with my face toward the small window, determined to strangle any curiosity I had about the behavior of my friends with sleep. For his part, Laszlo pulled out a copy of Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* that Lucius Isaacson had lent him and began very contentedly reading. Further

annoyed, I rolled over, pulled my cap down over my face, and began deliberately snoring even before I'd fallen asleep.

I was unconscious for over two hours, and woke to see rich, green New Jersey pastures shooting by the window. Stretching fully, I noted that my evil mood of the morning had at last departed: I was hungry, but otherwise quite pleased with life. A small note from Kreizler on the seat opposite me stated that he had gone to the dining car to secure a table for lunch, and I quickly neatened my appearance and made for that destination, ready to break bread with a vengeance.

The rest of our trip was first-rate. The farmlands of the Northeast are never more picturesque than in late May, and they formed a splendid backdrop for one of the better meals I've ever had on a train. Kreizler's spirits were still quite high, and for once he proved willing to discuss subjects other than the case. We talked of the upcoming national political conventions (the Republicans were set to gather in St. Louis in June, and the Democrats would follow suit in Chicago later in the summer), and then about a piece in the *Times* that stated that there had been a riot in Harvard Square following a victory posted by our alma mater's baseball team over Princeton. During dessert Kreizler nearly choked to death when he came across a report that Henry Abbey and Maurice Grau, managers of the Metropolitan Opera, had announced the failure of their company and debts of some $400,000. Laszlo's composure was partially restored by the additional news that a group of "private backers" (undoubtedly headed by our host of the previous evening) were organizing to put the company back on a solid footing. The first step in this process was to be a high-priced benefit performance of *Don Giovanni* on June 21st. Kreizler and I determined that this was an event we must attend, no matter what state our investigation might be in at the time.

We arrived in Washington's handsome Union Station late in the afternoon, and by dinnertime we were ensconced in a pair of very comfortable rooms at that imposing Victorian edifice on Pennsylvania Avenue and Fourteenth Street known as the Willard Hotel. All around us and quite visible from our fourth-story windows were the houses of our nation's government. In a very few minutes I could have strolled over to the White House and asked Grover Cleveland how it would feel to relinquish that residence twice in one lifetime. I had not seen the capital since the simultaneous terminations of my career as a political reporter and my engagement to Julia Pratt; and it was only as I stood in my room at the Willard and stared at the beautiful panorama of Washington on a spring evening that I fully recognized how very far away from that former life I had grown. It was a

melancholic sort of realization, and not to my liking; to counteract it, I quickly sought out a telephone and put in a call to Hobart Weaver, the old carousing partner of mine who was now a fairly high-level functionary at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. I found him still at his desk, and we made plans to meet that evening in the hotel dining room.

Kreizler joined us. Hobart was a portly, addle-brained, bespectacled fellow, who loved nothing more than free food and drink. By providing both commodities in abundance I was able to ensure that he would be not only discreet but uninquisitive about what Laszlo and I were up to. He informed us that the Bureau did, in fact, keep records of murders that were either known or presumed to have been committed by Indians. We told him that we were interested only in unsolved cases, though when he asked what parts of the country we were concerned with Kreizler could only reply, “Frontier regions during the last fifteen years.” Covering such a broad spectrum would, Hobart assured us, involve a lot of sifting through records, a task that he and I would have to undertake surreptitiously: Hobart’s boss, Interior Secretary Michael Hoke Smith, shared President Cleveland’s dislike of reporters, especially prying reporters. But as Hobart packed steadily more fowl and wine into his short round body, he became ever more convinced that we could do the job (although he remained completely oblivious of our purpose); and just to fully crystallize his resolve, I took him after dinner to a saloon that I knew of in the southeast section of the city where the entertainment was of what might be called the immodest variety.

Kreizler and I breakfasted together early the next morning. It was our hope that, making hard stages, the Isaacsons would be in Deadwood, South Dakota, by Thursday evening. They had been instructed to check the Western Union Telegraph office in that town for communications from us as soon as they arrived, and Kreizler sent the first such cable just after Wednesday morning’s breakfast. In it he told the brothers that, for reasons that would be explained later, priesthood had been eliminated as a likely profession for our quarry. New possibilities would be forwarded as soon as we had formulated them. Then it was off to St. Elizabeth’s Hospital for Laszlo, while I took a cheerful stroll up to F Street and over to the Patent Office building, which housed most of the staff and records of the Interior Department.

The enormous Greek Revival Patent Office had been completed in 1867 and was of a general layout that was fast becoming the rule for official buildings in the capital: rectangular, hollow, and as

monotonous on the inside as it was without. All of the two blocks between Seventh and Ninth streets were taken up by the thing, and it was no small job, once I'd gotten inside, to find Hobart's office. This vastness ultimately proved a blessing, however, for my presence provoked no comment: there were hundreds of federal employees wandering the hallways of the building's four wings, most of them ignorant of one another's identities and functions. Hobart, none the worse for the previous evening's activities, had already located a small desk for my use in a corner of one basement records room and had also laid hands on the first batch of files that I would have to investigate: reports from various frontier forts and administrative centers going back to 1881 and relating to violent incidents between settlers and the various Sioux tribes.

During the next two days I saw very little of Washington, outside of my little corner of that dusty records room. As will happen during extended periods of windowless research, reality soon began to lose its hold on my mind and the horrifying descriptions I pored over, of massacres, murders, and reprisals, took on a vividness that they would not have had if I'd been reading them, say, in one of the city's parks. Inevitably, I became distracted by tales that I knew held no promise for us—accounts of murders that had long since been solved, or whose salient characteristics were nothing like those of our case—but which were so morbidly fascinating on their own merits that I had to see how they turned out. There were some admittedly terrible yet nonetheless predictable accounts involving men, women, and children who had carved out a hard, lonely life in the wilderness only to be murdered in cold blood by the native inhabitants of the land. These killings were generally in retaliation for broken treaties and other legal arrangements, the negotiation and violation of which had been none of the settlers' doing. Such tales were, however, thankfully few. Most of the accounts were of acts of vengeance on the part of the Sioux which, while severe, seemed at least understandable when measured against the abominable treachery of the white soldiers, Indian agents (the Bureau of Indian Affairs was the most corrupt agency in a notoriously corrupt department), and traders in firearms and whiskey against whom they were committed. Reading the stories brought back to me vividly the concern with which Franz Boas and Clark Wissler had approached our investigation: the average white citizen of the United States, deeply distrustful of the Indian tribes, was also utterly ignorant of such records as I was exploring, and thus of the true state of white-Indian affairs. Most would have required no more than the suggestion of a link between any Indian group and the sort of behavior that our killer had exhibited to have their uninformed

opinions confirmed.

Late Wednesday, after the conclusion of my first long day in the Interior basement, Kreizler and I met to compare notes in his room at the Willard. The superintendent of St. Elizabeth's had proved as troublesome in person as he had been over the telephone wire, and Kreizler had been forced to resort to Roosevelt—who, in turn, had asked a friend of his in the attorney general's office to place a call to the man—in order to gain access to the hospital records. The process had taken up most of Kreizler's day, and while he'd had time to amass a list of names of soldiers who'd served with the Army of the West and subsequently been sent to St. Elizabeth's because of questionable mental stability, his overall mood when we met was one of severe disappointment: for while the man who'd been the subject of the original letter we'd received from St. Elizabeth's had indeed been a soldier, he'd apparently also been born and raised in the East, and never served anywhere west of Chicago.

"No roving bands of marauding Indians in Chicago anymore, I suppose?" I asked as Laszlo stared at a sheet detailing particulars of the man's background and service.

"No," Kreizler answered quietly. "It's a true pity. There are many other details that would recommend the fellow."

"Best not to dwell on them," I said. "We've got plenty of other candidates. So far Hobart and I have picked out four cases of mutilative murders in the Dakotas and Wyoming—all committed when both Sioux groups and army units were close by."

Kreizler put aside his piece of paper with great effort and looked up. "Did any involve children?"

"Two of the four," I answered. "In the first, two girls were killed with their parents, and in the second an orphaned girl and boy died with their grandfather, who was their guardian. The problem is that in both cases only the adult males were mutilated."

"Were any theories formulated?"

"Both were assumed to have been reprisal raids by war parties. But there's an interesting detail in the case involving the grandfather. It happened in the late fall of '89 near Fort Keough, during the period when the last great reservation was broken up. There were a lot of disgruntled Sioux around, mostly followers of Sitting Bull and another chief called"—I scanned my notes quickly with one finger—"Red

Cloud. Anyway, a small cavalry detail stumbled onto the murdered family, and the lieutenant in command initially laid the crime off to some of Red Cloud's more bellicose subordinates. But one of the older soldiers in the company said that Red Cloud's band hadn't launched any murder raids lately, and that the dead grandfather'd had a history of run-ins with Bureau agents and army men at another fort—Robinson, I think it was. Apparently the man had accused a cavalry sergeant at Robinson of trying to sexually assault his grandson. As it turned out, the sergeant's unit was in the Fort Keough area when the family was killed."

Kreizler hadn't been paying much attention up to that point, but these last facts brought him around. "Do we know the soldier's name?"

"Wasn't included in the file. Hobart's going to do a little digging at the War Department tomorrow."

"Good. But make sure you cable the information we have now to the detective sergeants in the morning. The details can follow."

We then went over the rest of the cases I'd culled, though for various reasons we eventually ruled them all out. After that, we dove into the stack of names that Kreizler had gathered at St. Elizabeth's, and succeeded in eliminating all but a few of them over the next several hours. Finally, at well past one o'clock in the morning, I retired to my room and poured out a healthy whiskey and soda, which I only managed to get halfway through before I fell asleep in my clothes.

Thursday morning found me back at my desk at the Interior Department, lost in more stories of unsolved deaths on the frontier. Along toward noon Hobart returned from his brief trip to the War Department, where he'd discovered a disappointing fact: The cavalry sergeant who'd figured in the story about the murdered grandfather had been forty-five years old at the time of the incident. That made him fifty-two in 1896: too old to fit the portrait we'd painted of our killer. Still, it seemed worthwhile to make a note of the man's name and last known whereabouts (he'd opened a dry goods store in Cincinnati after retiring from the army), just in case the age portion of our hypothesis turned out to be wrong.

"Sorry I couldn't have brought better news," Hobart said, as I jotted down the particulars. "Any interest in lunch?"

"Plenty," I answered. "Pick me up in an hour, I should make it through the 1892 cases by then."

"Fine." He started to move away from the desk, then touched his jacket pocket and seemed to remember something. "Oh, John. I meant to ask you—this search of yours is definitely confined to the frontier states and territories, is that right?" He pulled a folded paper from his pocket.

"That's right. Why?"

"Nothing. Just an odd story. I found it after you left last night." He tossed the piece of paper on my desk. "But it won't work—happened in New York State. Chops?"

I picked up the paper and began reading it. "What?"

"For lunch. Chops? There's a splendid new place on the Hill. Good beer, too."

"Fine."

Hobart sped away to catch a pretty young archivist who'd just passed my desk. From the direction of a nearby staircase I heard the woman squeal, and then there was a slapping sound and a little yelp of pain from Hobart. Chuckling quietly at the fellow's hopelessness, I leaned back in my chair to study the document he'd left me.

It related the curious story of a minister named Victor Dury and his wife, who in 1880 had been found murdered in their very modest home outside New Paltz, New York. The bodies had been what the document called "most foully and savagely torn to bits." Reverend Dury had formerly been a missionary in South Dakota, where he'd apparently made enemies among the Indian tribes; in fact, the constabulary in New Paltz had decided that the murders were an act of revenge on the part of several embittered Indians who'd been sent east by their chief for that very purpose. This bit of "detective" work had been the result of a note from the assassins found on the scene that explained the killings and stated that the dead couple's teenaged son was being taken back to live among the Indians as one of their own. It was quite a grim little tale, one that would have been of obvious use to us had its setting been further west. I put the paper aside, but in a few minutes picked it up again, wondering if there wasn't at least a chance that we were wrong about our killer's geographic background. Finally deciding to discuss the matter with Kreizler, I tucked the document away in my pocket.

The rest of the day offered only two cases that held out any hope of advancing our investigation. The first involved a group of children and their teacher who'd been slaughtered during their studies in an isolated schoolhouse; and the second, yet another prairie family who'd been massacred after a treaty violation. Realizing that the two accounts were meager reward for a long day's work, I set my sights on the Willard Hotel, hoping that Kreizler had had better luck during his second day of research. But Laszlo had discovered only a few additional names of soldiers who'd served in the Army of the West during the fifteen-year span we were investigating, then been institutionalized in the capital because of violent, unstable behavior, and finally suffered from some sort of facial disfigurement. Of these few, only one fell within the general age range that we were looking for (about thirty). As we sat down to dinner in the hotel dining room Kreizler handed me the case file on this man, and I offered him the document that told the tale of the Dury murders.

"Born and raised in Ohio," was my first comment on Laszlo's find. "He'd have to've spent a lot of time in New York after his discharge."

"True," Kreizler said, unfolding the paper I'd given him as he set to work halfheartedly on a bowl of crab bisque. "Which presents a problem—he didn't leave St. Elizabeth's until the spring of '91."

"A fast study," I commented with a nod. "But it's possible."

"I'm also not encouraged by the disfigurement—a long scar across the right cheek and the lips."

"What's the matter with that? Sounds fairly revolting."

"But it suggests a war injury, Moore, and that rules out childhood distress over the—"

Kreizler's eyes suddenly went very wide and he set his spoon down slowly as he finished reading the document I'd given him. Looking slowly from it to me, he then spoke in a tone of suppressed excitement. "Where did you get this?"

"Hobart," I answered simply, putting the file on the soldier from Ohio aside. "He found it last night. Why?"

His hands moving quickly, Kreizler snatched some more folded papers from his inside pocket. Quickly flattening them on the table, he then thrust the pile across to me. "Notice anything?"

It took one or two seconds, but I did. At the top of the first sheet of paper, which was yet another form from St. Elizabeth's Hospital, there was a space marked PLACE OF BIRTH.

In that space had been scribbled the words "New Paltz, New York."

CHAPTER 32

"This is the man they originally wrote to us about?" I asked.

Kreizler nodded eagerly. "I've kept the file with me. I dislike hunches generally, but I couldn't get away from this one. There are so many particulars that match—the poor upbringing in a strictly religious household, and the one sibling, a brother. Remember Sara's idea about his being from a small family, because the mother disliked childbearing?"

"Kreizler…," I said, trying to slow him down.

"And that tantalizing reference to 'a facial tic,' which even in his hospital record is never explained in any greater detail than 'an intermittent and violent contraction of the ocular and facial muscles.' No explanation as to why."

"Kreizler—"

"And then there's the pronounced emphasis on sadism in the admitting alienist's report, along with the particulars of the incident that caused his commitment—"

"Kreizler! Will you please shut up and let me look at this?"

He rose suddenly, all excitement. "Yes—yes, of course. And while you do, I'll check the cable office for messages from the detective sergeants." He put the document I'd given him back down. "I've a powerful feeling about this, Moore!"

As Kreizler dashed out of the dining room I began to carefully go over the first page of the hospital file:

Corporal John Beecham, admitted to St. Elizabeth's Hospital in May of 1886, had at that time stated that he'd been born in New Paltz, the small town just west of the Hudson River and some sixty-five miles north of New York that had been the scene of the Dury murders. The specific date of birth cited was November 19, 1865. His parents were identified only as "deceased," and he had one brother, eight years older than himself.

I reached over and grabbed the Interior Department document that told of the murdered minister and his wife. Those crimes had been committed in 1880, and the victims were listed as having a teenaged son who'd been kidnapped by Indians. A second and older son, Adam Dury, was apparently at his home just outside Newton, Massachusetts, at the time of the murders.

I grabbed another sheet of the hospital file and scanned the notes penned by John Beecham's admitting alienist, in an effort to find the specific cause of the corporal's confinement. Despite the sloppiness of the doctor's handwriting, I soon had it:

"Patient was part of force requested by governor of Illinois to quell disturbances arising from strikes in Chicago area beginning May 1st (Haymarket riots, etc.). During May 5th action against strikers North Chicago, soldiers ordered to open fire; patient subsequently found stabbing corpse of one dead striker. Lieutenant M—discovered patient *in flagrante;* patient claims M—always 'had it in for him,' etc., and was constantly 'watching' him; M—ordered patient relieved of duty, regimental surgeon pronounced him unfit for service."

Then followed the comments on sadism and delusions of persecution that Kreizler had already told me about. In the rest of the file I found more reports written by other alienists during Beecham's four-month stay at St. Elizabeth's, and I scanned them for further references to the man's parents. There was no mention anywhere of his mother, and very little talk of his childhood generally; but one of the final assessments, written just before Beecham's release, contained the following paragraph:

"Patient has applied for writ h.c. [*habeas corpus*] and continues to claim nothing wrong or criminal in behavior; says society must have laws and men to enforce them; father was evidently a very godly man, who emphasized importance of rules and punishment of violators. Recommend increased dosage c. hydrate."

Just then Kreizler came speeding back to the table, shaking his

head. “Nothing. Their arrival must have been delayed.” He indicated the various papers I was holding. “Well, Moore, what do you make of it all?”

“The timing matches,” I answered slowly. “Along with the location.”

Kreizler clapped his hands together and sat back down. “I never would have *dreamed* of such a possibility. Who could have? Kidnapped by Indians? It’s almost absurd.”

“It may *be* absurd,” I replied. “I haven’t gotten the impression in the last couple of days that Indians take many male children captive—and certainly not if they’re as old as sixteen.”

“Can you be certain of that?”

“No. But Clark Wissler probably could. I’ll put in a call tomorrow morning.”

“Do that,” Kreizler answered with a nod, taking the Interior document back from me and again studying it. “We need more particulars.”

“That occurred to me, too. I can telephone Sara, and put her onto a friend of mine at the *Times* who’ll let her into the morgue.”

“The morgue?”

“Where back issues are kept. She could find the story, it must have made the New York papers.”

“Yes—yes, it would have.”

“In the meantime, Hobart and I’ll see if we can find out who this ‘Lieutenant M—’ is, and whether or not he’s still in the army. He might be able to supply more details.”

“And I’ll return to St. Elizabeth’s, and talk to anyone who had any personal knowledge of Corporal John Beecham.” Kreizler lifted his wineglass with a smile. “Well, Moore—new hope!”

Anticipation and curiosity made sleep difficult that night, but morning brought the welcome news that the Isaacsons had finally arrived in Deadwood. Kreizler instructed them by wire to stay put until they heard from us that afternoon or evening, while I went to the lobby to place my telephone calls to New York. It took some doing to

get through to the Museum of Natural History, and locating Clark Wissler was an even greater challenge; but when his voice finally did come through the line he was not only helpful but quite enthusiastic—largely, I think, because he was able to say confidently that the story described in the Interior Department document was almost certainly a fabrication. The idea that any Indian chieftain would dispatch assassins all the way to New Paltz—and that they would reach that destination without incident—was outlandish enough; but the further assertions that, having committed the murders, they would then leave behind an explanatory note, kidnap rather than kill the victims' adolescent son, and make their way back across the country without ever being noticed was too far-fetched even to be considered. Someone, Wissler was sure, had put a none-too-clever bit of trickery over on the obviously dull-witted authorities in New Paltz. I thanked him heartily for his help, then rang off and 'phoned Number 808 Broadway.

Sara answered in a very edgy voice: Apparently there'd been a lot of interest displayed in our headquarters during the previous forty-eight hours by a variety of unsavory characters. Sara herself had been followed fairly constantly, she was certain of that; and even though she never went out unarmed, such close scrutiny was nerve-racking. Boredom only worsened things: Because Sara had had little to do since our departure, her mind was free to focus all the more on her spectral stalkers. For this reason the thought of activity, even if it was only research at the *Times,* acted as a tonic on her spirits, and she devoured the details of our latest theory with relish. I then asked her how long she thought it would be before Cyrus would be able to accompany her around town, to which she answered that although the big fellow had been released from the hospital, he was still too weak to leave his bed at Kreizler's house.

"I'll be all right, John," she insisted to me, though her words lacked some of their usual conviction.

"Of course you will," I answered. "I doubt if half the criminals in New York are as well armed. Or cops, for that matter. All the same, get Stevie to stick with you. He's quite the item in a brawl, even at his size."

"Yes," Sara answered, with a calming laugh. "He's already been very helpful—sees me home every night. We smoke cigarettes together, though you needn't tell Dr. Kreizler that." I wondered for a moment why she persisted in calling him "Dr. Kreizler," but there was more pressing business at hand.

"I've got to go, Sara. Telephone as soon as you have anything."

"All right. Watch out for yourselves, John."

I rang off and went to find Kreizler.

He was still in the cable office, putting the last words to a wire that he proceeded to send to Roosevelt. Phrasing his sentences vaguely (and putting no signature to the message), Laszlo asked Theodore to contact first the office of the mayor of New Paltz, in an attempt to ascertain whether a family or person named Beecham had lived in that town at any point during the last twenty years, and second the authorities in Newton, Massachusetts, to see if one Adam Dury still resided there. Anxious as we both were to get replies to these questions, we knew that they would take time, and that we still had plenty of work to do at St. Elizabeth's and the Interior Department. Somewhat reluctantly, we left the cable office and went out into another magnificent spring morning.

Even though there were many details to be attended to that day, it was impossible for me to keep my mind from wandering back to the larger mysteries surrounding John Beecham and Victor Dury, and I'm sure Kreizler experienced much the same thing. Several questions became particularly persistent: If the story about Indian assassins was, in fact, false, who had concocted it? Who had actually committed the murder, and what had happened to the younger Dury boy? Why was there so little discussion, in the hospital records, of John Beecham's early life, and no mention at all of his mother? And where was that obviously troubled man now?

The day's work brought no answers to these questions: neither the Interior nor the War Department could supply further details of either the Dury murder or John Beecham's life before his commitment to St. Elizabeth's. Kreizler fared no better at said hospital, which, he told me that evening, was neither required nor empowered to find out where a patient was going once he had secured his release through a writ of *habeas corpus.* In addition, none of the few members of the nonmedical staff who had been at the hospital at the time of Beecham's commitment could remember anything about the man other than his facial spasms. He was apparently utterly unremarkable in his outward manner, a fact that, while frustrating in terms of our present purposes, did fit in nicely with the proposition that our killer was not a man who would attract any notice save at the time of his violent acts.

The only useful bit of information that did emerge on that Friday

was brought to the Willard in the evening by Hobart Weaver. According to War Department records, the lieutenant who'd had John Beecham relieved of duty in 1886 was one Frederick Miller, since promoted to captain and currently serving at Fort Yates, North Dakota. Laszlo and I knew that an interview with this man might prove invaluable; yet a trip to Yates would take the Isaacson brothers in the opposite direction from their original destination, the Pine Ridge Agency. Still, it was the most solid lead we'd been able to develop, and on balance seemed worth the detour. And so, at six o'clock that evening, Kreizler and I sent a wire to Deadwood, telling the detective sergeants to secure passage north immediately.

As for incoming messages, the cable office had received a wire from Roosevelt, saying that there was, in fact, a man living in Newton, Massachusetts, named Adam Dury. Theodore still hadn't heard from New Paltz regarding our question about a man or family named Beecham, but he was pursuing the matter. Kreizler and I were left with little to do but wait and hope that we'd hear more from either Roosevelt or Sara later in the evening. After telling the desk clerk that we would be in the bar, Laszlo and I retired to that dark, richly paneled room, then sought out a secluded spot along the lengthy brass rail and ordered a pair of cocktails.

"While we wait, Moore," Kreizler said, sipping his sherry and bitters, "you can edify me about this labor disturbance that led to John Beecham's commitment. I have a vague recollection but nothing more."

I shrugged. "Not much to explain. In '86 the Knights of Labor organized strikes in every major city in the country for May 1st. The situation in Chicago got out of hand very quickly—strikers fought breakers, police busted up strikers, breakers went at it with cops—a mess. On the fourth day a big crowd of strikers got together in Haymarket Square, and the cops arrived in force to keep things orderly. Somebody—nobody knows who—threw a bomb into the police ranks. Killed a few. It could've been a striker, or an anarchist trying to start trouble, or even an agent of the factory owners, looking to discredit the strikers. The point was, the governor had a good excuse to call out the militia and some federal troops. The day after the bomb blast, there was a strikers' rally at a mill in one of the northern suburbs. The troops showed up, and their commander later claimed he ordered the strikers to disperse. The strike leaders said they never heard any such order. Whatever the case, the troops opened fire. It was an ugly scene."

Kreizler nodded, going over the thing in his mind. “Chicago…the city has a fairly large immigrant population, does it not?”

“Sure. Germans, Scandinavians, Poles—you name it.”

“There would have been a good number of them among the strikers, don’t you think?”

I held up a hand. “I know where you’re headed with this, Kreizler, but it doesn’t necessarily mean anything. There were immigrants involved in every strike in the country at that time.”

Laszlo frowned a bit. “Yes, I suppose so. Still—”

Just then a young bellboy in a brass-buttoned red uniform entered the bar, calling out my name. Jumping up, I went to the lad, who told me that I was wanted by the desk clerk. Kreizler followed as I dashed out front. The clerk handed me his telephone, and as soon as I took it up I heard Sara’s very excited voice:

“John? Are you there?”

“Yes, Sara. Go ahead.”

“Sit down. We may be onto something.”

“I don’t want to sit down. What is it?”

“I found the story of the Dury murder in the *Times*. There were featured articles for about a week, and smaller notices after that. Just about anything you’d want to know about the family was in them.”

“Wait,” I said. “Tell it to Kreizler so he can take notes.”

Laszlo put his small notebook on the registration desk, annoying the clerk, and then lifted the telephone’s earpiece. This is the story he heard, which I followed from his scribblings:

The Reverend Victor Dury’s father had been a Huguenot who’d left France in the early part of the last century to avoid religious persecution (the Huguenots being Protestants, and most of their countrymen Catholics). He’d gone to Switzerland, but the family’s fortunes had not flourished there. His oldest son, Victor, a Reformed Church minister, had decided to try his luck in America. Arriving at mid-century, Dury had made his way to New Paltz, a town founded by Dutch Protestants in the eighteenth century that had later become

home to scores of French Huguenot immigrants. Here Dury had started a small evangelical movement, funded by the citizens of the town, and within a year he'd moved with his wife and young son to Minnesota, with the intention of spreading the Protestant faith among the Sioux there (said Indians not yet having been pushed west to the Dakotas). Dury didn't make much of a missionary: he was harsh and overbearing, and his vivid descriptions of the wrath that God would bring down on unbelievers and transgressors did little to impress the Sioux with the advantages of a Christian life. The group in New Paltz that had been financing his work had been on the verge of recalling him when the great Sioux uprising of 1862—one of the most savage Indian-white conflicts in history—broke out.

During that event the Dury family only narrowly escaped the grisly fate that befell many of their fellow whites in Minnesota. But the experience nonetheless provided the reverend with an idea that he thought would ensure continued backing for his mission. Laying his hands on a daguerreotype camera, he went around taking photographs of massacred whites; and when he returned to New Paltz in 1864, he became famous—indeed infamous—for showing these pictures to large collections of the town's better-off citizens. It was a blatant attempt to frighten those staid, fat people into providing more funds, but it backfired: the pictures of slain and mutilated corpses were so horrifying, and Dury's behavior during the presentations so feverish, that the reverend's sanity began to be questioned. He became something of a social pariah, unable to find a religious posting. Ultimately, he was reduced to working as a caretaker in a Dutch Reformed church. The unexpected arrival of a second son in 1865 only made financial matters worse, and the family was eventually forced to move into a tiny house outside town.

Knowing Dury's troubled history and behavior as well as they did, and no more informed about Indian habits than the average white community in the eastern United States, most of the citizens of New Paltz had never questioned the idea that Dury's murder in 1880 was prompted by the bitterness he'd engendered among the Sioux in Minnesota during his stay among them nearly two decades earlier. All the same, there was some scattered talk (its originators anonymous, of course) of bad relations between the Durys and their oldest son, Adam, who'd moved away to become a farmer in Massachusetts many years before the killings. Rumors that Adam might have snuck west into New York State and done his parents in—for what precise reason no one would publicly say—began to spread, but were never treated as anything other than gossip by the police; and while no trace of the younger Dury boy, Japheth, had ever been found, the idea of his being

kidnapped to become an Indian brave fit in thoroughly with what New Paltz's citizens had been taught to expect from the savages who inhabited the western territories.

So ended the tale of the Dury family; Sara's research, however, had not been limited to that story. Recalling that she'd known a few people in New Paltz during her youth (even though the town was, as she put it, "on quite the wrong side of the river"), she'd made some social calls after leaving the *Times,* just to see if any of those old acquaintances knew anything about the murders. The one such person she found at home did not. But Sara had gone on to ask for a general description of everyday life in New Paltz, and in so doing had stumbled on a rather electrifying fact: that New Paltz sits at the foot of the Shawangunk Mountains, a range well known for its large, forbidding rock formations. Almost afraid of the answer she might get, Sara'd next asked whether or not any citizens of the town enjoyed climbing those formations as a pastime. Oh, yes, she'd been told, it was quite a popular sport—especially among those residents who had most recently arrived from Europe.

Both Kreizler and I were fairly stunned by this last item and needed time to absorb both it and the rest of the tale. Telling Sara that we would telephone again later in the evening, Laszlo rang off, following which we returned to the hotel bar to mull things over.

"Well?" Kreizler said in a somewhat awed tone, as we ordered a fresh round of iced cocktails. "What do you make of it?"

I took in a deep breath. "Let's start with facts. The older Dury boy witnessed some of the most horrendous atrocities imaginable before he was old enough to make any sense of them."

"Yes. And his father was a priest, or at least a minister—the religious calendar, Moore. Their home would have been regulated by it."

"The father also seems to have been a very hard, not to mention a rather peculiar, man—though outwardly respectable, at least in the beginning."

Kreizler mapped his thoughts on the bar with a finger. "So…we can assume a pattern of domestic violence, one beginning early and continuing unabated for years. It plants an urge for revenge that steadily mounts."

"Yes," I agreed. "We've got no shortage of motive. But Adam's older

than we've posited."

Kreizler nodded. "While the younger boy, Japheth, would have been the same age as Beecham. Now, if *he* committed the murders, then fabricated the note, disappeared, and took a different name—"

"But he's not the one who witnessed the massacres and mutilations," I said. "He wasn't even born yet."

Kreizler knocked a fist against the bar. "True. He would have had no frontier experience."

Letting the facts recombine in a number of ways in my head, I tried but failed to come up with a new interpretation. All I could say after several minutes was, "We still don't know anything about the mother."

"No." Kreizler kept rapping his knuckles on the bar. "But they were a poor family, living at close quarters. That would have been especially true during the Minnesota period, which would have been the most vivid time in the eldest son's life."

"Right. If only he were younger…"

Laszlo sighed and shook his head. "A host of questions—and the answers to be found, I suspect, only in Newton, Massachusetts."

"So—do we go up there and find out?"

"Who knows?" Kreizler sipped his cocktail nervously. "I confess to feeling at a loss, Moore. I'm no professional detective. What do we do? Stay here and try to uncover more information about Beecham, at the same time pursuing any new leads we may uncover? Or go to Newton? How does one know when it's time to stop looking at all possibilities and pursue one course?"

I thought about that for a moment. "We *can't* know," I finally decided. "We don't have the experience. But—" I got up and headed for the cable office.

"Moore?" Kreizler called after me. "Where the devil are you going?"

It took me just five minutes to condense the key aspects of Sara's research into a cable, which I dispatched to the telegraph office in Fort Yates, North Dakota. The message concluded with a simple request: ADVISE COURSE.

Kreizler and I spent the rest of the evening in the Willard's dining room, fixed in place until the staff informed us that they were going home. At that point, with sleep utterly out of the question, we went for a walk around the White House grounds, smoking and putting every conceivable twist on the story we'd heard that night, while simultaneously searching for a way to connect it to Corporal John Beecham. Pursuing the Dury lead would take time, that much was becoming very apparent; and while neither of us said as much, we both knew that should such time be wasted we would likely find ourselves, at the moment of the killer's next attempt, no better prepared than we had been on Pentecost to stop him. Two courses of action, both full of risks, awaited our decision. Wandering about aimlessly in the Washington night, Kreizler and I were effectively paralyzed.

It was fortunate indeed, therefore, that when we returned to the Willard the clerk had a wire in hand for us. It had originated in Fort Yates, and must have been sent only moments after the Isaacsons got to that destination. Though brief, it was unhesitating in tone: THE LEAD IS SOLID. FOLLOW IT.

CHAPTER 33

The approach of dawn found us on a train and headed back to New York, where we planned to look in at Number 808 Broadway before going on to Newton, Massachusetts. It would have been impossible to do anything constructive in Washington—even sleep—once we'd had our inclination to pursue the Dury lead confirmed; the train ride north, on the other hand, would at least satisfy the craving for action and thereby allow us to rest easily for several hours. Such, at any rate, was my hope when we got on board; but I hadn't been dozing in our darkened compartment for long when a feeling of deep uneasiness caused me to stir. Striking a match to try to determine if there was any rational basis for my fear, I saw Kreizler, sitting across from me, staring out the compartment window at the blackened landscape as it sped by.

"Laszlo," I said quietly, studying his wide eyes by the orange light of the match. "What is it, what's happened?"

The knuckle of his left forefinger was rubbing against his mouth. "The morbid imagination," he mumbled.

I hissed suddenly as the match burned down to my fingers. Letting the flame fall to the floor and go out, I mumbled into the resurgent darkness. "What imagination? What are you talking about?"

"'I myself have personally read this and know it to be true,'" he said, quoting our killer's letter. "The cannibalism business. We've postulated a morbid, impressionable imagination as an explanation."

"And?"

"The pictures, John," Laszlo answered, and though I couldn't see his

face (or anything else in the compartment), his voice remained tense. “The photographs of massacred settlers. We’ve been assuming that our man must have been on the frontier at some point in his life, that only personal experience could have provided a model for his current abominations.”

“You’re saying Victor Dury’s pictures could’ve served that purpose?”

“Not for anyone. But for this man, given the impressionability created by a childhood of violence and fear. Remember what we said about the cannibalism—it was something he read, or perhaps heard, probably as a child. A frightening story that left a lasting impression. Wouldn’t photographs produce a far more extreme result, in a person characterized by such an obsessive and morbid imagination?”

“It’s possible, I suppose. You’re thinking about the missing brother?”

“Yes. Japheth Dury.”

“But why would anyone show such things to a child?”

Kreizler answered in a distracted tone: “‘Dirtier than a Red Injun…’”

“I beg your pardon?”

“I’m not certain, John. Perhaps he stumbled on them. Or perhaps they were used as a disciplinary tool. More answers to be found in Newton, I hope.”

I thought the matter over for a moment, then felt my head bobbing back down toward the seat that I was lying on. “Well,” I finally said, giving in to the bob, “if you don’t get some rest you won’t be fit to talk to anyone, in Newton or anywhere else.”

“I know,” Kreizler answered. Then I could hear him shifting on his seat. “But the thought struck me…”

The next thing I knew we were in the Grand Central Depot, being rudely awakened by the slams of compartment doors and the bumps of bags against the wall of our compartment. Looking none the better for our eventful night, Kreizler and I stumbled off the train and out of the station into an overcast, gloomy morning. Since Sara would not yet be at our headquarters, we decided to make stops at our respective homes, then rendezvous at Number 808 when we were feeling (and hopefully looking) a bit more human. I got another two hours’ sleep and a splendid bath at Washington Square, then breakfasted with my

grandmother. The mental ease that had so thankfully settled on her following the execution of Dr. H. H. Holmes was, I noticed during the meal, beginning to wear thin: she scanned the back pages of the *Times* nervously, looking for the next deadly threat with which to preoccupy her evening hours. I took the liberty of pointing out the futility of such a course to her, only to be told rather curtly that it was not her intention to take advice from someone who found it appropriate to commit social suicide in not one but two cities by being seen in public with "that Dr. Kreizler."

Harriet packed me a fresh overnight bag for the trip to Newton, and by nine o'clock I was in the caged elevator at Number 808 Broadway, full of coffee and feeling remarkably game. Now that I was back, it seemed as though I'd been away from our headquarters far longer than four days, and I looked forward to seeing Sara again with unabashed enthusiasm. When I reached the sixth floor I found her in close conversation with Kreizler, but, determined now to utterly ignore whatever it was that was going on between them, I dashed over and gave her a big, spinning hug.

"John, you ass!" she said with a smile. "I don't care if it *is* spring—you know what happened the last time you were fresh with me!"

"Oh, no," I said, dropping her quickly. "Once in that river is enough for any lifetime. Well? Has Laszlo brought you up to date?"

"Yes," Sara answered, tightening the bun on the back of her head and flashing defiance in her green eyes. "You two have had all the fun, and I've just told Dr. Kreizler that if you think I'm going to sit around here for one more minute while you barrel off to yet another adventure, you're very much mistaken."

I brightened up a bit. "You're coming to Newton?"

"I said I wanted adventure," she answered, swiping at my nose with a sheet of paper. "And being locked up on a train with you two does not, I'm afraid, fill that bill. No, Dr. Kreizler says someone's got to go to New Paltz."

"Roosevelt telephoned a few minutes ago," Laszlo said to me. "Apparently the name Beecham does appear in various records in that town."

"Ah," I said. "Then it would appear that Japheth Dury did *not* become John Beecham."

Kreizler shrugged. “It’s a further complication, that’s all we can be sure of, and it requires investigation. You and I, however, must get to Newton as soon as possible. And with the detective sergeants still gone, that leaves Sara. It’s her territory, after all—she grew up in the region and doubtless knows how to ingratiate herself with the local officials.”

“Oh, doubtless,” I said. “What about coordinating things here?”

“An overrated job, if ever there was one,” Sara answered. “Let Stevie do it, until Cyrus is out of bed. Besides, I shouldn’t be gone more than a day.”

I turned a lecherous glance on the girl. “And how valuable is my support in this scheme?”

Sara spun away. “John, you really are a pig. Dr. Kreizler’s already agreed.”

“I see,” I answered. “Well, then—that’s that, I suppose. My opinion not being worth the air it takes to express it.”

And in such fashion was Stevie Taggert set loose to ransack our headquarters for cigarettes. As of high noon that day the youth was left in charge of the place, his face as we departed giving me the impression that he’d smoke the upholstery from the Marchese Carcano’s chairs if he couldn’t find anything better. Stevie paid careful attention to Laszlo’s instructions about how to contact us while we were gone, but when those instructions led into a warning speech concerning the evils of nicotine addiction, the boy seemed suddenly to go deaf. Laszlo, Sara, and I had barely started downstairs in the elevator when the sounds of drawers and cupboards opening and closing became audible from above. Kreizler only sighed, aware that for the moment we had bigger fish to fry; but I knew that once our case was settled there would be many long lectures on clean living to be heard at the house on Seventeenth Street.

The three of us stopped briefly at Gramercy Park so that Sara could pick up a few things (in case her visit to New Paltz lasted longer than anticipated), following which we engaged in another bit of subterfuge with the same set of decoys that Laszlo had hired prior to our trip to Washington. Then it was back to the Grand Central Depot. Sara split off to buy a ticket for the Hudson River Line, while Kreizler and I made purchases at the New Haven Line windows. Goodbyes were, as they had been on Monday, brief and unrevealing of any connection

between Sara and Kreizler; I was beginning to think I was as wrong about them as I'd been about a rogue priest being responsible for the murders. Our Boston train departed on time, and before long we'd passed through the eastern portions of Westchester County and into Connecticut.

The difference between Laszlo's and my trip to Washington earlier in the week and our present journey to Boston, on Saturday afternoon, was roughly the difference between the two respective landscapes surrounding us, as well as that between the kinds of people who inhabited the regions. Gone, on Saturday, were the verdant, rolling fields of New Jersey and Maryland: all around us the scraggly countryside of Connecticut and Massachusetts crept awkwardly down to Long Island Sound and the sea beyond, bringing to mind the hard life that had made such mean, contentious people out of the farmers and merchants of New England. Not that one needed such an indirect indication of what life in that quarter of the country was like; human exemplars were sitting all around us. Kreizler hadn't purchased first-class seats, a mistake whose gravity only became fully evident when the train reached top speed and our fellow travelers raised their grating, complaining drawls to overcome the rattle of the cars. For hours Kreizler and I endured loud conversations about fishing, local politics, and the shameful economic condition of the United States. Despite the din, however, we did manage to formulate a sound plan for dealing with Adam Dury if and when we found him.

We detrained at Boston's Back Bay Station, outside of which were collected a group of drivers who had rigs for hire. One man in the group, a tall, gaunt fellow with vicious little eyes, stepped toward us as we approached with our bags.

"Newton?" Laszlo said to him.

The man cocked his head and stuck out his lower lip. "Good ten miles," he judged. "I won't be back 'fore midnight."

"Then double your price," Laszlo answered peremptorily, throwing his bag into the front seat of the man's rather battered old surrey. Although the driver looked a bit disappointed at losing the chance to quibble over the cost of the trip, he responded to Laszlo's offer with alacrity, jumping up onto the rig and grabbing his whip. I rushed to climb aboard, and then we drove off to the sound of the other rig drivers groaning about what kind of interloping fool would offer double the going rate for a ride to Newton. After that, all was silence for quite a while.

A troubled sunset that seemed to promise rain reached out over eastern Massachusetts, as the fringes of Boston slowly gave way to mile after mile of monotonous, rocky farmland. We didn't reach Newton until well past dark, whereupon our driver offered to take us to an inn that he said was the best in town. Both Kreizler and I knew that this probably meant the place was operated by some member of the man's family, but we were tired, hungry, and on terra incognita: there was little to do but acquiesce. Rolling through the impossibly quaint streets of Newton, as numbingly picturesque a community as one could hope to find even in New England, I began to get the disturbingly familiar feeling of being trapped by narrow lanes and narrow minds, a kind of anxiety that had often consumed me during my time at Harvard. The "best inn in Newton" did nothing to relieve this uneasiness: sure enough, it was a loosely clapboarded building, with spare furnishings and a menu that ran to things boiled. The only bright moment occurred during supper, when the innkeeper (our driver's second cousin) said that he could provide directions to the farm of Adam Dury; and, hearing that Kreizler and I would need a ride in the morning, the man who'd brought us offered to spend the night and perform the service. Such details taken care of, we retired to our low, dark rooms and hard little beds to allow our stomachs to do their best with the boiled mutton and potatoes we'd dined on.

Rising early the next day, Laszlo and I tried but failed to avoid the innkeeper's breakfast offering of thick, tough flapjacks and coffee. The sky had cleared, evidently without shedding any rain, and outside the inn stood the old surrey, with our driver aboard and ready to depart. Traveling north, we saw little sign of any human activity for nearly half an hour; then a herd of dairy cattle came into view, grazing in a pitted, rock-strewn pasture, beyond which a small group of buildings stood amid a stand of oaks. As we approached these structures—a farmhouse and two barns—I made out the figure of a man standing ankle deep in barnyard manure and trying with difficulty to shoe a tired old horse.

The man, I noted quickly, had thinning hair, and his scalp glistened in the morning sun.

CHAPTER 34

To judge by the dilapidated state of his barns, fences, and wagons, as well as the absence of any assistants or particularly healthy-looking animals, Adam Dury had not made much of a go of his little dairy cattle enterprise. Few people live in closer proximity to life's grimmer realities than do poor farmers, and the atmosphere of such places is inevitably sobering: Kreizler's and my excitement at actually laying eyes on the man we'd traveled a fairly long way to find was immediately tempered by appreciation of his circumstances, and after getting down from the surrey and telling our driver to wait, we approached him slowly and carefully.

"Excuse me—Mr. Dury?" I said, as the fellow continued to struggle with the old horse's left foreleg. The fly-ridden brown beast, its hide bare in several spots where a yolk would have rested, appeared to have absolutely no interest in making its master's task any easier.

"Yes," the man answered sharply, still showing us nothing more than the back of his balding head.

"Mr. Adam Dury?" I inquired further, trying to induce him to turn around.

"You must know that, if you've come to see me," Dury answered, finally dropping the horse's leg with a grunt. He stood up, rising to a height of well over six feet and then slapped the horse's neck, half in anger and half affectionately. "This one thinks he'll die before me, anyway," he mumbled, still facing the horse, "so why should he be cooperative? But we've both got many more years of this to go, you old…" Dury finally turned round, revealing a head whose skin was so tightly drawn that it appeared little more than a flesh-colored skull. Large yellow teeth filled the mouth, and the almond-shaped eyes were

of a lifeless blue tint. His arms were powerfully developed, and the fingers of his hands as he wiped them on his worn overalls seemed remarkably long and thick. He took our measures with a squinting grimace that was neither friendly nor hostile. “Well? What can I do for you two gentlemen?”

I moved directly—and, if I may say so, gracefully—into the bit of subterfuge that Laszlo and I had worked out on the Boston train. “This is Dr. Laszlo Kreizler,” I said, “and my name is John Schuyler Moore. I’m a reporter for *The New York Times.*” I found my billfold and revealed some professional identification. “A police reporter, actually. My editors have assigned me to investigate some of the more—well, to come to the point, some of the more outstanding unsolved cases of recent decades.”

Dury nodded, a bit suspiciously. “You’ve come to ask about my parents.”

“Indeed,” I answered. “You’ve no doubt heard, Mr. Dury, of the recent investigations into the conduct of the New York City Police Department.”

Dury’s thin eyes went even thinner. “The case was none of their affair.”

“True. But my editors are concerned with the fact that so many noteworthy cases are never pursued or solved by law enforcement agencies *throughout* the state of New York. We’ve decided to review several and see what’s happened in the years since their occurrence. I wonder if you’d mind just going over the basic facts of your parents’ death with us?”

All the features of Dury’s face seemed to shift and resettle in a kind of wave, as if a shudder of pain had rippled through him quickly. When he spoke again, the tone of distrust had vanished from his voice, to be replaced only by resignation and sorrow. “Who could have any interest now? It’s been more than fifteen years.”

I attempted sympathy, as well as moral indignation: “Does time justify the lack of a solution, Mr. Dury? And you are not alone, remember—others have seen murderous acts go unsolved and unavenged, and they’d like to know why.”

Dury weighed the matter for another moment, then shook his head. “That’s their business. I’ve got no desire to talk about it.”

He began to move away; knowing New Englanders as well as I did, however, I'd anticipated this reaction. "There would, of course," I announced calmly, "be a fee."

That got him: he paused, turned, and eyed me again. "Fee?"

I gave him a friendly smile. "A consulting fee," I said. "Nothing excessive, mind you—say, one hundred dollars?"

Aware that such a sum would, in fact, mean a great deal to a man in his straits, I was not surprised to see Dury's almond eyes jump. "One hundred dollars?" he echoed in quiet disbelief. "For *talking*?"

"That's right, sir," I answered, producing the sum from my billfold.

Thinking it all over just a bit more, Dury finally took the money. Then he turned to his horse, swatted its rump, and sent it off to graze on a few patches of grass that grew near the edge of the yard. "We'll talk in the barn," he said. "I've got work to do, and I can't ignore it for the sake of"—he took heavy steps away from us through the sea of manure—"ghost stories."

Kreizler and I followed, much relieved at the apparent success of the bribe. Concern returned, however, when Dury spun round at the barn door.

"Just a minute," he said. "You say this man's a doctor? What's his interest?"

"I make a study of criminal behavior, Mr. Dury," Laszlo answered smoothly, "as well as of police methods. Mr. Moore has asked me to provide expert advice for his article."

Dury accepted that, though it seemed that he didn't much like Kreizler's accent. "You're German," he said. "Or maybe Swiss."

"My father was German," Kreizler answered. "But I was raised in this country."

Dury seemed ill satisfied by Kreizler's explanation, and silently walked on into the barn.

Inside that creaky structure the stench of manure grew stronger, softened only by the sweet aroma of hay, a store of which was visible in the loft above us. The bare plank walls of the building had once been whitewashed, but most of the paint had fallen away to reveal

roughly grained wood. A chicken coop was visible through one four-foot doorway, the gurgles and clucks of its occupants floating out toward us. Harnesses, scythes, shovels, picks, mauls, and buckets were everywhere, hanging from the walls and the low roof or lying on the earthen floor. Dury went directly over to a very old manure spreader, the axle of which was propped up on a pile of rocks. Taking up a mallet and slamming away at the wheel that faced us, our host eventually forced it from its mount. Dury then hissed in disgust and began to fuss with the end of the axle.

"All right," he said, grabbing a bucket of heavy grease and never looking our way. "Ask your questions."

Kreizler nodded to me, indicating that it might be best if I took the lead in the questioning. "We've read the newspaper accounts that appeared at the time," I said. "I wonder if you might tell us—"

"Newspaper accounts!" Dury grunted. "I suppose you've also read, then, that the fools suspected *me* for a time."

"We've read that there was gossip," I answered. "But the police said that they never—"

"Believed it? Not much, they didn't. Only enough to send two of their men all the way over here to harass my wife and myself for three days!"

"You're married, Mr. Dury?" Kreizler asked quietly.

For just a second or two, Dury eyed Laszlo, again resentfully. "I am. Nineteen years, not that it's any business of yours."

"Children?" Kreizler asked, in the same cautious tone.

"No," came the hard answer. "We—that is, my wife—I—no. We have no children."

"But I take it," I said, "that your wife was able to attest to your being here when the—the terrible incident occurred?"

"That didn't mean much to those idiots," Dury answered. "A wife's testimony counts for little or nothing in a court of law. I had to ask a neighbor of mine, a man who lives nearly ten miles away, to come and verify that we were pulling a stump together on the very day my parents were murdered."

“Do you know why the police should have been so hard to convince?” Kreizler asked.

Dury slammed his mallet down on the ground. “I’m sure you read about *that,* too. *Doctor.* It was no secret. There’d been bad blood between my parents and myself for many years.”

I held a hand up to Kreizler. “Yes, we saw some mention of such,” I said, trying to coax more details out of Dury. “But the police accounts were very vague and confused, and it was difficult to draw any conclusions. Which seems remarkable, given that the question was vital to the investigation. Maybe you could make it a little clearer for us?”

Lifting the manure spreader’s wheel onto a workbench, Dury began to pound at it again. “My parents were hard people, Mr. Moore. They had to be, to make the trip to this country and survive the life they chose for themselves. But while I can say that now, such explanations are quite beyond a small boy who—” A blast of passionate language seemed about to escape the man, but he held it down with obvious effort. “Who only hears a cold voice. And only feels a thick strap.”

“Then you *were* beaten,” I said, thinking back to Kreizler’s and my original speculations after first reading of the Dury murders in Washington.

“I wasn’t referring to myself, Mr. Moore,” Dury answered. “Though God knows neither my father nor my mother ever shrank from punishing me when I misbehaved. But that was not what caused our—estrangement.” He looked out a small, filthy window for a moment, then pounded at the wheel again. “I had a brother. Japheth.”

Kreizler nodded as I said, “Yes, we read about him. Tragic. You have our sympathy.”

“Sympathy? I suppose. But I’ll tell you this, Mr. Moore—whatever those savages did to him was no more tragic than what he endured at the hands of his own parents.”

“He suffered cruelties?”

Dury shrugged. “Some might not call them such. But I did, and do still. Oh, he was a strange lad, in some respects, and the ways in which my parents reacted to his behavior might have seemed—natural, to an outsider. But it wasn’t. No, sir, there was the devil in it all, somewhere…” Dury’s attention wandered for a moment, but then

he shook it off. “I’m sorry. You wanted to know about the case.”

I spent the next half hour asking Dury some obvious questions about what had happened on that day in 1880, requesting clarification of details that we were not, in fact, confused about, as a method of concealing our true interests. Then I managed, by asking him why any Indians should have wanted to kill his parents, to lead him into a more detailed discussion of what life in his home during the Minnesota years had been like. From there, it was no great job to expand the discussion to a history of the family’s private dealings more generally. As Dury related these, Laszlo stealthily withdrew his small notebook and began to silently scribble a record of the account:

Though born in New Paltz in 1856, Adam Dury’s earliest memories dated back only as far as his fourth year, when his family had relocated to Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, a military post inside that state’s Lower Sioux Agency. The Durys lived in a one-room log house about a mile outside the fort, the kind of residence that afforded young Adam an excellent vantage point from which to study his parents and their relationship. His father, as Kreizler and I already knew, was a strictly religious man, who made no attempt to sugarcoat the sermons he delivered to those curious Sioux who came to hear him speak. Yet Laszlo and I were both surprised to learn that, despite this vocational rigidity, the Reverend Victor Dury had not been especially cruel or violent to his older son; rather, Adam said that his earliest memories of his father were happy ones. True, the reverend could deliver painful punishments when required; but it was usually Mrs. Dury who called for such action.

As he spoke of his mother, Adam Dury’s aspect grew darker and his voice became far more hesitant, as if even her memory held some tremendous threatening power over him. Cold and strict, Mrs. Dury had apparently not offered her son much in the way of comfort or nurturing during his youth; indeed, as I listened to his description of the woman, I couldn’t help but think back to Jesse Pomeroy.

“Much as it pained me to be shunned by her,” Dury said, as he attempted to fit the now-repaired wheel back onto the manure spreader, “I believe her remote spirit hurt my father even more—for she was no real wife to him. Oh, she performed all the menial domestic duties, and kept a very tidy home, despite our meager circumstances. But when your family lives in one small room, gentlemen, you cannot help but be aware of the—the more intimate dimension of your parents’ marriage. Or the lack thereof.”

“You’re saying they weren’t close?” I asked.

“I’m saying that I don’t know why she married him,” Dury answered gruffly, making the axle and wheel before him bear the brunt of his sadness and anger. “She could scarcely abide his slightest touch, much less his—his attempts to build a family. My father, you see, wanted children. He had ideas—dreams, really—of sending his sons and daughters out into the western wilderness to expand and carry on his work. But my mother…Their every attempt was an ordeal for her. Some of these she suffered through, and some she—resisted. I honestly do not know why she ever took the vow. Except—when he preached… My father was quite an orator, in his way, and my mother attended nearly every service he ever held. She did seem to enjoy that part of his life, strangely enough.”

“And after you returned from Minnesota?”

Dury shook his head bitterly. “After we returned from Minnesota things deteriorated completely. When my father lost his post he lost the only human connection he had to my mother. They rarely spoke in the years after that, and never touched, not that I can recall.” He looked up at the filthy window. “Except once…”

He paused for several seconds, and to urge him on I murmured: “Japheth?”

Dury nodded, slowly rousing himself from his sad reverie. “I’d taken to sleeping outdoors when it was warm enough. Near the mountains—the Shawangunks. My father had learned the sport of mountaineering in Switzerland from his own father, and the Shawangunks were an ideal spot to keep his hand in, as well as to pass the techniques on to me. Though I was never very good at it, I always went along with him, because they were happier times—away from the house and that woman.”

If the words had been explosives I don’t think their concussion could have hit Kreizler and me any harder. Laszlo’s weak left arm shot out, and his hand grabbed my shoulder with surprising force. Dury saw none of it and, unaware of the effect his words were having on us, continued:

“But during the coldest months there was no avoiding the indoors, not unless I wanted to die of exposure. And I remember one February night when my father…he may have been drinking, though he rarely did. But, sober or no, he began to finally rebel against my mother’s

inhuman behavior. He spoke of the duties of a wife, and the needs of a husband, and he began to grab at her. Well…My mother screamed in protest, of course, and told him he was acting like the savages we'd left behind in Minnesota. But my father wouldn't be stopped that night—and despite the cold I fled the house through a window, and slept in an old barn that belonged to a neighbor of ours. Even from that distance I could hear my mother's cries and sobs." Once again, Dury seemed to lose all awareness of his present surroundings and spoke in a detached, almost lifeless voice: "And I wish I could say that those sounds horrified me. But they didn't. In fact, I distinctly remember urging my father on…" His presence of mind returned, and, somewhat embarrassed, he picked up his hammer and began pounding at the wheel once more. "No doubt I've shocked you, gentlemen. If so, I apologize."

"No, no," I answered quickly. "You're only giving us a better understanding of the background, we quite understand that."

Dury shot Laszlo another quick, skeptical look. "And you, Doctor? Do you quite understand, too? You haven't had much to say."

Kreizler kept very cool under Dury's scrutiny. There was, I knew, little chance that this man of the earth was going to make so seasoned a madhouse campaigner as Kreizler uneasy. "I have been too absorbed to comment," Laszlo said. "If you'll allow me to say so, Mr. Dury, you are very well-spoken."

Dury laughed once humorlessly. "For a farmer, you mean? Yes, that was my mother's doing. She made us work at our school lessons for hours every night. I could both read and write before the age of five."

Kreizler cocked his head in appreciation. "Laudable."

"My knuckles didn't think so," Dury answered. "She used to come across them with a stick like—but once again, I'm off the subject. You wanted to know what became of my brother."

"Yes," I answered. "But before that, tell us—what sort of a boy was he? You've said odd—odd in what way?"

"Japheth?" Having secured the wheel to the manure spreader's axle, Dury stood and laid hold of a large pole. "In what way was he not?…I suppose you couldn't expect much more, from a child born out of anger and unwanted by both his parents. To my mother he was a symbol of my father's savagery and lust, and to my father—to my father, much as he wanted more children, Japheth was always a

symbol of his degradation, of that terrible night when desire made an animal of him." Using the long pole, Dury knocked the piled rocks out from under the spreader's axle, at which the machine fell to the earthern floor of the barn and rolled a few feet forward. Satisfied with his work, Dury took up a shovel and kept talking. "The world is full of pitfalls for a boy left on his own. I tried to give Japheth what help I could, but by the time he was old enough for us to be real friends I had been sent to work on a nearby farm and saw little of him. I knew that he was suffering all that I'd endured in that house, and even more. And I wished that I could have been more help."

"Did he ever tell you," I asked, "just what was happening?"

"No. But I saw some of it," Dury said as he began to shovel manure from the floor of several livestock stalls into the spreader. "And on Sundays I'd try to spend time with him, and show him that there was much he could still enjoy about life, whatever happened at home. I taught him how to climb the mountains, and we spent whole days and nights up there. But in the end…In the end, I don't believe that anyone could have counteracted my mother's influence."

"Was she—violent?"

Dury shook his head, and spoke in a voice that seemed judicious and honest. "I don't think Japheth suffered in that way any more than I had. The occasional strap to the backside from my father, and nothing more. No, I believed then, and I still believe now, that my mother's ways were far more—devious." Dury laid his shovel aside, sat down on one of the large rocks that had supported the spreader, and took out a pouch of tobacco and a pipe. "I suppose, in a way, that I was luckier than Japheth, only because my mother's feelings toward me had always taken the form of thorough indifference. But Japheth—it didn't seem enough for her to merely deprive him of love. She took issue with his every action, his every move, however insignificant. Even when he was an infant, even before he had any awareness or control over himself—she'd badger him about everything he did."

Kreizler leaned forward, offering a match that Dury took only reluctantly. "What do you mean by 'everything,' Mr. Dury?" Laszlo asked.

"You're a medical man, Doctor," Dury answered. "I think you can guess." Smoking for a few seconds to get a good coal going in his pipe, Dury finally shook his head and grunted angrily. "The cruel bitch! Hard words, I know, for a man to assign to his own dead mother. But

if you could have seen her, gentlemen—*at* him, always at him. And when he complained, or cried, or went into a rage over it, she'd say things so despicable that I would've thought them beyond even her." Dury stood up and continued shoveling. "That he wasn't her son. That he was the child of red Indians—dirty, man-eating savages who'd left him in a bundle at our door. The poor little fellow half-believed it, too."

Pieces were falling into place with every passing minute; and as they did, it became steadily more difficult for me to control a profound, swelling sense of discovery and triumph. I almost wished that Dury would end his account, just so I could run outside and scream to the heavens that, all opposition be damned, Kreizler and I were going to catch our man. But I knew that self-control was more important now than it had ever been, and I tried to follow Kreizler's self-composed example.

"And what happened," Laszlo asked, "when your brother got a bit older? Old enough, that is, to—"

With savage, terrifying suddenness, Adam Dury screamed incomprehensibly and threw his shovel against the rear wall of the barn. The chickens in the adjacent coop sent up a flurry of frightened clucks and feathers, and, hearing them, Dury wrenched his pipe from his mouth and attempted to regain control over himself. Kreizler and I made no move, though I know my own eyes had gone quite wide with shock.

"I think," Dury seethed, "that we had all best be honest with each other. *Gentlemen.*"

Kreizler said nothing, and my own voice quavered badly as I asked, "Honest, Mr. Dury? But I assure you—"

"Damn it!" Dury shouted, slamming a foot to the earth. Then he waited a few more seconds, until he could speak more calmly again. "Don't you think there was talk of it at the time? Do you imagine that simply because I'm a farmer I'm also an idiot? I know what it is you're here to find out!"

I was about to offer further protests, but Kreizler touched my arm. "Mr. Dury has been exceptionally forthright with us, Moore. I believe we owe him the same courtesy." Dury nodded, and his breathing became something like regular as Kreizler went on: "Yes, Mr. Dury. We believe there is every chance that your brother murdered your

parents."

A pitiable sound, half-sob and half-gasp, got out of our host. "And is alive?" he said, almost all traces of anger gone from his voice.

Kreizler nodded slowly, and Dury held his arms up helplessly. "But why should it matter now? So long ago—it's over, done. If my brother is alive, he's never contacted me. Why should it matter?"

"Then you suspected it yourself?" Kreizler said, avoiding the question as he produced a flask of whiskey and held it out to Dury.

Dury nodded again and took a drink, no longer displaying the resentment toward Laszlo that he'd shown earlier. I had thought that attitude the result of Kreizler's accent; I could see now that it had been spawned by Dury's suspicion that this visit—from what he must have thought a very strange sort of doctor—might reach just such a pass.

"Yes," Dury said at length. "You must remember, Doctor, that I'd lived among the Sioux, as a boy. I had several friends, in their villages. And I'd witnessed the uprising in '62. I knew that the explanation the police finally accepted of my parents' death was almost certainly a lie. And more than that, I knew—my brother."

"You knew that he was capable of such an act," Kreizler said softly. He was maneuvering very carefully, now, just as he'd done with Jesse Pomeroy. His voice remained calm, but his questions became steadily more pointed. "How, Mr. Dury? How did you know?"

I felt a twinge of real sympathy when a tear appeared on Dury's cheek. "When Japheth was—oh, nine or ten," he said softly, after taking another deep pull from the flask, "we spent a few days up in the Shawangunks. Hunting and trapping small game—squirrel, possum, coons, and such. I'd taught him to shoot, but he wasn't much for it. A born trapper, Japheth was. He'd spend a whole day searching out an animal's lair or nest and then wait for hours, alone in the dark, to spring his scheme. It was a talent. But one day we were hunting separately—I'd gone to trail some bobcat tracks I'd spotted—and as I came back to camp I heard a strange, terrible scream. A wail. High-pitched and faint, but awful. As I came into the camp I caught a glimpse of Japheth. He'd trapped himself a possum, and he was—he was cutting the thing to pieces while it was still alive. I ran up and put a bullet in the poor creature's brain, and took my brother aside. He had an evil sort of light in his eyes, but after I'd hollered at him for a while, he began to cry and seemed truly sorry. I thought it was a lone

incident—the kind of thing a boy might do if he knew no better, and wouldn't do again once he'd been told." Dury began to poke at his pipe, which had gone out.

Kreizler offered another match. "But it wasn't," he said.

"No," Dury answered. "It happened several times over the next few years—several times that I knew of, that is. He never bothered the big animals, the cattle or horses on the farms around us. It was always—always the small creatures that seemed to bring it out in him. I kept trying to put a stop to it; and then…"

His voice trailing off, Dury sat and stared at the ground, seemingly unwilling to go on. Kreizler, however, kept after him gently: "And then something worse happened?"

Dury smoked and nodded. "But I didn't hold him responsible, Doctor. And I think you'll agree that I was right not to." One of his hands became a fist and he slammed it into his thigh. "But my mother, damn her, just took it as another example of Japheth's devilish behavior. Claimed he brought it on himself, as if any boy would!"

"I'm afraid you'll have to explain, Mr. Dury," I said.

He nodded quickly, then took a final sip of whiskey before handing the flask back to Kreizler. "Yes, yes. I'm sorry. Let me see—this would have been during the summer of—hell, it was just before I moved away, the summer of '75 it must've been. Japheth was eleven. At the farm where I'd been working they'd recently hired a new man; he was just a few years older than me. A charming character, to all appearances. Seemed to have quite a way with children. We got to be friendly, and eventually I invited him along on a hunting trip. He took a great interest in Japheth, and my brother took a real liking to him—so much so that the fellow came along on a few more outings. Japheth and he would go off trapping together, while I hunted larger game. I'd explained to this—this *thing* that I thought was a man that Japheth was to be discouraged from tormenting any animals they might catch. The fellow seemed to understand the situation thoroughly. I trusted him, you see, to look after my brother." A dull knocking sound came from the outer wall of the barn. "And he betrayed that trust," Dury said, getting to his feet. "In the worst way a man can." Opening the filthy window and sticking his head out it, Dury called: "Now, you! Go on away from there, I've told you—go on!" He came back inside, scratching at the few hairs on his head. "Fool horse. Covers himself in burrs to get at a little patch of clover that grows behind the barn, and

I can't seem to…I'm sorry, gentlemen. At any rate, I found Japheth in our camp one evening, half-naked and weeping, bleeding from the—well, bleeding. The fiend I'd left him with was gone. We never saw him again."

From the exterior of the barn came the same muffled pounding, prompting Dury to grab a long, thin switch and head for the door. "If you'll just give me a moment, gentlemen."

"Mr. Dury?" Kreizler called. Our host stopped and turned at the barn doorway. "This fellow, the farmhand—can you recall his name?"

"Indeed I can, Doctor," Dury answered. "Guilt has burned it into my memory. Beecham—George Beecham. Excuse me."

The name struck me harder than had any piece of information that had been revealed thus far, and turned much of the triumphant exhilaration that I'd been feeling back into confusion. "*George* Beecham?" I whispered. "But, Kreizler, if Japheth Dury is, in fact—"

Kreizler held up an urgent, silencing finger. "Save your questions, Moore, and remember one thing—if we can avoid it, let's keep our true object from this man. We know almost everything we need to know. Now—make an excuse, and let's depart."

"Everything we need—well, you may know everything you need to know, but I've still got a thousand questions! And why should we keep it from him, he's got a right—"

"What good can it do him?" Kreizler whispered harshly. "The man has suffered and agonized over this affair for years. What purpose can it serve, of his *or* ours, to tell him that we believe his brother responsible not only for his parents' murders, but for the deaths of half a dozen children?"

That gave me pause; for if, in fact, Japheth Dury was alive, but had never tried to contact his brother, Adam, then there was no way in which this tormented farmer could further assist our investigation. And to tell him of our suspicions, even before they were substantiated, did indeed seem the very height of mental cruelty. For all these reasons, when Dury returned from disciplining his horse, I followed Kreizler's instructions and concocted a tale about a train back to New York and deadlines that had to be met, using all the standard excuses I'd employed a thousand times in my journalistic career to get out of similarly difficult situations.

“But you’ve got to tell me something, honestly, before you go,” Dury said, as he walked us back to the surrey. “This business about writing an article on cases that have gone unsolved—is there any truth in that? Or are you going to reopen this case alone and speculate about my brother’s involvement by using the information I’ve given you?”

“I can assure you, Mr. Dury,” I answered, the truth enabling me to speak with conviction, “there will be no newspaper articles about your brother. What you’ve told us allows us to see how the police investigating the case went wrong—nothing more. It shall be treated just as you’ve told it to us—in the strictest confidence.”

That brought a firm shake of my hand by Dury. “Thank you, sir.”

“Your brother suffered a great deal,” Kreizler answered, also shaking Dury’s hand. “And I suspect that his suffering has gone on, in the years since your parents were killed—if indeed he is still alive. It is not our place to judge him, or to profit from his misery.” The tight skin of Dury’s face grew tighter as he strained to hold back strong emotions. “I have just one or two more questions,” Laszlo went on, “if you wouldn’t mind.”

“If I have the answers, they’re yours, Doctor,” Dury said.

Kreizler inclined his head appreciatively. “Your father. Many Reformed ministers place little emphasis on church holidays—but I get the feeling he did otherwise?”

“Indeed,” Dury answered. “Holidays were among the only pleasant occasions in our house. My mother objected, of course. She’d get out her Bible and explain why such celebrations amounted to papistry and what punishments those who celebrated them could expect. But my father persisted—in fact, he gave some of his finest sermons on holidays. But I can’t see how—”

Kreizler’s black eyes were positively alight as he held up a hand. “It’s a small point, I know, but I was curious.” Climbing up onto the surrey, Laszlo appeared to remember something. “Oh, and another detail.” Dury looked up expectantly as I joined Kreizler in the carriage. “Your brother, Japheth,” Laszlo went on. “At what point did he develop the—the difficulty in his face?”

“His spasms?” Dury answered, again puzzled by the question. “He always had them, to the best of my recollection. Perhaps not when he was an infant, but soon after that and for the rest of his—well, for as

long as I knew him, at any rate."

"They were constant?"

"Yes," Dury said searching his memory. Then he smiled. "Except, of course, in the mountains. When he was trapping. Those eyes of his were as calm as a pond then."

I wasn't at all sure how many more revelations I could hear without bursting, but Kreizler took it all in stride. "A sad but in many ways remarkable boy," he pronounced. "You wouldn't have a photograph of him, I suppose?"

"He always refused to be photographed, Doctor—understandably."

"Yes. Yes, I suppose so. Well, goodbye, Mr. Dury."

We finally pulled away from the little farm. I turned to watch Adam Dury tread heavily back into the barn, his long, powerful legs and large, booted feet still sinking deep into the mire and refuse that surrounded the building. And then, just before he went inside, he stopped suddenly and turned quickly toward the road.

"Kreizler," I said. "Did Sara mention there being anything about Japheth Dury's tic in the newspaper stories about the family?"

"Not that I recall," Kreizler answered, without turning around. "Why?"

"Because based on Adam Dury's present expression, I'd say it *wasn't* ever mentioned—and he's just realized it. He's going to have a tough time figuring out how we could've known." Though my enthusiasm was still mounting, I tried hard to get it under control as I turned back around and declared, "Good God! Tell me, Kreizler—tell me we've got him! A lot of what that man said confuses the hell out of me, but please, *please* tell me that we've got a solution!"

Kreizler allowed himself to smile, and held up his right fist passionately. "We've got the pieces of one, John—that much I'm sure of. Perhaps not *all* the pieces, yet, and perhaps not correctly arranged—but yes, we have most of it! Driver! You may take us directly to the Back Bay Station! There is a 6:05 train to New York, as I remember—we must be on it!"

For what must have been miles we were full of scarcely coherent expressions of triumph and relief; and if I'd known how brief this

feeling would be, I might have savored it more than I did. But an hour or so past the halfway point of our return trip to the Back Bay Station, a sound not unlike the short, sharp crack of a broken tree limb rang out in the distance, signaling the end of all exultation. I can distinctly remember the crack's being immediately followed by a very short, hissing sort of sound; and then something slammed into the horse that was drawing our surrey, bringing a fountain of blood from the beast's neck and knocking it stone-dead to the ground. Before the driver, Kreizler, or I could react there was another sharp crack and hiss, and then an inch or so of flesh was torn out of Laszlo's upper right arm.

CHAPTER 35

With a short cry and a long curse Kreizler spun to the floor of the surrey. Knowing that we were still badly exposed, I forced him to jump out of the carriage and then crawl underneath it, where we both pressed ourselves close to the ground. Our driver, by contrast, walked out and into the open, for the apparent purpose of studying his dead horse. I urged the man to get down; but the evident loss of future revenue had made him blind to his present safety, and he continued to make a tempting target out of himself—until, that is, another report sounded and a bullet whined into the ground near his feet. Looking up and suddenly comprehending the danger he was in, the driver took to his heels and made for some thick woods fifty yards behind us, on the opposite side of the road from a stand of trees that seemed to be harboring our assailant.

As he continued to seethe and swear oaths, Kreizler also managed to get his jacket off, following which he instructed me on how to minister to his wound. It didn't appear as serious as it was messy—the bullet had just nicked the muscles of his upper arm—and the most important thing was to stop the bleeding. After removing my belt I fashioned it into a tourniquet just above the bleeding gash, and then drew it tight. Tearing Laszlo's shirtsleeve, I made it into a bandage, and soon the crimson flow had ebbed. When a bullet crashed into the wheel of the surrey, however, shattering one of the thick spokes, I was reminded of how soon we might have other injuries to address.

"Where is he?" Kreizler said, scanning the trees in front of us.

"I saw some smoke, just left of that white birch," I answered, pointing. "*Who* is he, is what I want to know."

"I fear we have entirely too many possibilities to choose from,"

Kreizler replied, tightening his bandage a bit and groaning as he did. "Our adversaries from New York would be the most obvious choice. Comstock's authority and influence are quite *national.*"

"Long-range assassins don't really seem like Comstock's style, though. Or Byrnes's, for that matter. What about Dury?"

"Dury?"

"Maybe that realization about the twitch changed his attitude—he may think we're crossing him."

"But did he really seem a murderer," Kreizler asked, folding his arm and cradling it, "for all his violent talk? Besides, he made it sound as though he's a decent shot—unlike this fellow."

That gave me a thought: "What about…*him*? Our killer? He could've followed us from New York. And if it *is* Japheth Dury, remember that Adam said he never really took to shooting."

Kreizler considered the idea as he continued to scan the woods, then shook his head. "You're being fanciful, Moore. Why follow us here?"

"Because he knew where we were going. He knows where his brother lives, and that talking to Adam could help us track him down."

Laszlo's head kept shaking. "It's too fantastic. It's Comstock, I tell you—"

Another gunshot suddenly cut through the air, and then a bullet tore large shards of wood out of the side of the surrey.

"Point well taken," I said, in answer to the bullet. "We can argue about all this later." I turned to study the woods behind us. "Looks like the driver made it to those trees all right. Do you think you can run with that arm?"

Kreizler groaned once sharply. "As easily as I can lie here, damn it!"

I grabbed Laszlo's jacket. "When you get into the open," I said, "try not to run in a straight line." We both turned and crawled to the other side of the carriage. "Keep your movements irregular. Go on ahead, and I'll follow in case you have trouble."

"I've a rather unsettling feeling," Kreizler said, scanning the fifty

yards of open space, “that such trouble is likely to be permanent, in this case.” That thought seemed to strike Laszlo hard. Just as he was about to take flight, he stopped and fingered his silver watch, then handed it to me. “Listen, John—on the chance that—well, I want you to give this to—”

I smiled and pushed the watch back at him. “A rank sentimentalist, just as I always suspected. Go on, you can give it to her yourself—move!”

Fifty yards of supposedly open northeastern terrain can seem a lot more difficult to cover than you might imagine when the stakes of the run are mortal. Every little rodent hole, ditch, puddle, root, and stone between the carriage and the woods became an almost insurmountable obstacle, my pounding heart having robbed my legs and feet of their usual agility. I suppose it took Kreizler and me somewhere under a minute to run the fifty yards to safety; and though we were apparently menaced by only a single gunman who didn’t have anything like expert aim, it felt as though we were in a full-scale battle. The air around my head seemed alive with bullets, though I don’t think more than three or four shots were actually taken at us; and by the time I completed the escape, with branches lashing at my face as I propelled myself further and further into the wooded darkness, I was as close to incontinent as I hope ever to be.

I found Kreizler propped up against an enormous fir tree. His bandage and tourniquet had loosened, allowing a new flow of blood to stream down his arm. After retightening both dressings I draped his jacket around his shoulders, for it seemed that he was growing cold and losing color.

“We’ll stay parallel to the road,” I said quietly, “until we catch sight of some traffic. We’re not far from Brookline, and we can get a lift to the station from there.”

I got Laszlo up and helped him start through the thick woods, keeping one eye on the road so that we never lost track of it. When we came within sight of the buildings of Brookline I figured it was safe to come out of the woods and move at a faster clip. Soon after we had, an ice van came by and drew to a halt, its driver jumping down to ask what had befallen us. I made up a story about a carriage accident, prompting the man to offer us a ride as far as the Back Bay Station. This proved a doubly fortunate stroke, for several large pieces of ice from the van driver’s stock eased the pain in Kreizler’s arm.

By the time the Back Bay Station came into view it was almost five-thirty, and the afternoon sunlight had begun to take on an amber, hazy quality. I asked our driver to let us off near a small stand of scraggly pines some two hundred yards from the station itself, and after we'd gotten off the van and thanked the man for his help and his ice, which had almost completely checked the flow of blood from Kreizler's arm, I hustled Laszlo into the shadowy darkness beneath the deep green boughs.

"I'm as enamored of nature as the next man, Moore," Kreizler said in confusion. "But this hardly seems the time. Why didn't we drive to the station?"

"If that was one of Comstock and Byrnes's men back there," I answered, picking a spot among the pine needles that offered a good view of the station house, "he'll probably guess that this is our next move. He may be waiting for us."

"Ah," Laszlo noised. "I see your point." He crouched down on the pine needles, then began rearranging his bandage. "So we wait here, and then board the train unseen when it arrives."

"Right," I answered.

Kreizler drew out his silver watch. "Almost half an hour."

I glanced over at him pointedly and smiled a bit. "Just enough time for you to explain that schoolboy gesture with your watch back there."

Kreizler looked away quickly, and I was surprised by the extent to which the comment seemed to embarrass him. "There is," he said, returning my smile despite himself, "no chance that you'll forget that incident, I suppose?"

"None."

He nodded. "I thought not."

I sat down near him. "Well?" I said. "Are you going to marry the girl or not?"

Laszlo shrugged a bit. "I have—considered it."

I let my head fall with a quiet laugh. "My God…marriage. Have you—well, you know—asked her?" Laszlo shook his head. "You might want to wait until the investigation's over," I said. "She'll be more

likely to agree."

Kreizler looked puzzled at that. "Why?"

"Well," I answered simply, "she'll have proved her point, if you know what I mean. And be more amenable to tying herself down."

"Point?" Kreizler said. "What point?"

"Laszlo," I answered, lecturing him a bit, "in case you haven't noticed, this whole affair means rather a lot to Sara."

"Sara?" he repeated in bewilderment—and by the way he said the name I realized just exactly how wrong I'd been since the very beginning.

"Oh, no," I sighed. "It's *not* Sara…"

Kreizler stared at me for a few more seconds, then leaned back, opened his mouth, and let out a deeper laugh than any I'd ever heard from him; deep, and irritatingly long.

"Kreizler," I said contritely, after a full minute of this treatment. "Please, I hope you'll—" He didn't stop, however, at which annoyance began to come through in my voice. "Kreizler. Kreizler! All right, I've made a jackass out of myself. Now will you have the decency to shut up?"

But he didn't. After another half-minute the laugh finally did begin to calm, but only because it was now causing some pain in his right arm. Holding that wounded limb, Laszlo continued to chuckle, tears appearing in his eyes. "I am sorry, Moore," he finally said. "But what you must have been thinking—" And then another round of painful laughter.

"Well, what in hell was I *supposed* to think?" I demanded. "You've had enough time alone with her. And you said yourself—"

"But Sara has no interest in marriage," Kreizler answered, finally getting himself under control. "She's little enough interest in men at all—she's constructed her entire life around the idea that a woman can live an independent, fulfilling existence. You ought to know that."

"Well, it did cross my mind," I lied, trying to salvage some vestige of dignity. "But the way that you were acting, it seemed as though—well, I don't know how it seemed!"

“That was one of the first conversations I had with her,” Kreizler explained further. “There were to be no complications, she said—everything would be strictly professional.” Laszlo studied me as I pouted. “It must have been very trying for you,” he said, with another chuckle.

“It was,” I answered petulantly.

“You might’ve simply *asked.*”

“Well, Sara wasn’t the only one trying to be professional!” I protested, stamping a foot. “Though I can see now that I shouldn’t have bothered with any—” I suddenly stopped, my volume falling again. “Wait a minute. Just one minute. If it’s not Sara, then who in hell—” I turned slowly to Laszlo, and then he turned equally slowly to the ground: the explanation was all over his face. “Oh, my God,” I breathed. “It’s Mary, isn’t it?”

Kreizler looked toward the station, and then into the distance in the direction from which the train would approach us, as if searching for salvation from this inquisition. None came. “It’s a complicated situation, John,” he finally said. “I must ask you to understand and respect that.”

Too shocked to offer any commentary, I proceeded to sit mutely through Laszlo’s subsequent explanation of this “complicated situation.” Clearly there were aspects of the thing that disturbed him deeply: Mary had originally been a patient of his, after all, and there was always the danger that what she believed was affection for him was in reality a kind of gratitude and, worse still, respect. For this reason, Laszlo explained to me carefully, he’d tried very hard not to encourage her or to permit himself any reciprocal emotions when it had first become clear to him, almost a year earlier, how she felt. At the same time, he was anxious that I should understand how very much his and Mary’s mutual attraction had grown from beginnings that in many ways were perfectly natural.

When Kreizler first started to work with the illiterate and supposedly uncomprehending Mary, he quickly realized that he would not be able to communicate with her until he could establish a bond of trust. And he forged that bond by revealing to her what he now referred to ambiguously as his own “personal history.” Unaware that I currently knew more about his personal history than he’d ever told me, Kreizler didn’t realize how fully I understood his words. Mary had probably been, I speculated, the first person who ever heard the tale

of Laszlo's apparently violent relationship with his own father, and such a difficult disclosure would indeed have bred trust, and more: while Laszlo had only intended to encourage Mary to tell her own tale by telling his, he had, in fact, planted the seeds of an unusual sort of intimacy. That intimacy had survived into the period when Mary came to work for him, making life on Seventeenth Street far more interesting, not to mention perplexing, than it had ever been before. When it eventually became impossible for Kreizler to deny first that Mary's feelings for him went beyond mere gratitude, and, second, that he was experiencing a similar attraction to her, he entered on a long period of self-examination, trying to determine if what he felt was not at heart a kind of pity for the unfortunate, lonely creature whom he'd taken under his roof. He only fully satisfied himself that it was not several days before our investigation burst in on his life. The case forced him to put off a resolution of his personal predicament; yet it also helped him clarify what form that resolution might take. For when it became clear that not only were the members of our team in physical danger, but his servants, as well, Kreizler experienced a desire to protect Mary that went far beyond the usual duties of a benefactor. At that point he decided that she should be told as little as possible about the case, and play no part in its prosecution: knowing that his enemies might come at him through the people he cared about, Laszlo hoped to safeguard Mary by making sure that, on the off chance some outsider found a way to communicate with her, she had no useful information to divulge. It hadn't been until the morning of our departure for Washington that Kreizler had decided it might be time for his and Mary's relationship to, as he rather awkwardly put it, "evolve." He informed her immediately of this decision; and she watched him depart with tears in her eyes, fearful that something would happen to him while he was away and thus prevent their ever becoming more than master and servant.

As Kreizler finished his story, I heard the first whistle of the New York train in the eastern distance. Still stunned, I nonetheless began going over the events of recent weeks in my mind, trying to determine where it was that I had gone so wrong in my interpretation.

"It was Sara," I finally said. "Since the beginning she's been behaving like—well, I don't know just what she's been behaving like, but it's been damned peculiar. Does she know?"

"I'm sure of it," Kreizler answered, "though I've never told her. Sara seems to view everything around her as a test case on which to sharpen her detecting skills. I believe this little puzzle has been most entertaining for her."

"Entertaining," I said with a grunt. "And I thought it was love. I'll bet she knew I was off on the wrong track. It's just the kind of thing she'd do, let me go around thinking—well, you wait till we get back. I'll show her what happens when you play that kind of game with John Schuyler—"

I stopped as the New York train appeared a mile or so down the tracks to our left, still moving at high speed toward the station.

"We can continue this on board," I said, helping Kreizler up. "And rest assured we *will* continue it!"

After waiting for the train to come to a full, grunting halt outside the station, Kreizler and I began a quick trot across another rock- and ditch-riddled field toward the vehicle's last car. We climbed onto the observation deck and then moved stealthily on inside, where I got Laszlo comfortably positioned in a rear seat. There was as yet no sign of the conductor, and we used the few minutes before our departure to neaten Kreizler's bandage, and our general appearances, as well. I glanced out at the station platform every few seconds, trying to spot anyone whose demeanor might betray him for an assassin, but the only other people entraining were an elderly, well-to-do woman with a walking stick and her large, rather harried nurse.

"Looks as though we may have gotten a break," I said, standing in the aisle. "I'll just have a quick look up ahead and—"

My voice froze as my eyes turned to the rear door of the car. Two large forms had appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, on the observation deck; and although their attention was directed away from the train—they were arguing with a station official—I could see enough of them to recognize the two thugs who had chased Sara and me from the Santorellis' flat.

"What is it, Moore?" Kreizler asked, eyeing me. "What's happened?"

Knowing that in his current condition Laszlo wasn't going to be much good in a confrontation of any kind, I tried to smile, and then shook my head. "Nothing," I said quickly. "Nothing at all. Don't be so jumpy, Kreizler."

We both turned at the sound of the elderly woman and her nurse entering the front door of our car. Though my stomach was alive with sudden dread, my mind was working reliably: "I'll be right back," I told Laszlo, and then I approached the newcomers.

“Excuse me,” I said, smiling and doing my best to be engaging. “May I be of some assistance in getting you settled, madam?”

“You may,” the old woman answered, in a tone that indicated she was very familiar with being waited on hand and foot. “This wretched nurse of mine is utterly useless!”

“Oh, surely not,” I answered, eyeing the walking stick that the woman was leaning on: it had a fine head of heavy silver, which was fashioned into the likeness of a swan. I seized the woman’s arm and guided her into a seat. “But there are limits,” I said, surprised at the old woman’s weight and ungainliness, “to even the best nurse’s capabilities.” The nurse gave me a smile, at that, and I took the opportunity to lay hold of the old woman’s stick. “If you’ll allow me to hold this, madam, I think we can—there!” With a loud groan the seat received its occupant, who let out a rush of air.

“Oh!” the woman exclaimed. “Oh, yes, that’s better. Thank you, sir. You are a gentleman.”

I smiled again. “A pleasure,” I said, walking away.

As I passed Kreizler he gave me a dumbfounded look. “Moore, what the devil—”

I indicated silence to him, then approached the rear door of the car, keeping my face to one side so that I couldn’t be seen from without. The two men were still arguing with the station attendant on the platform, about what I couldn’t tell; but when I looked down I saw that one of them held a rifle case. “He’ll have to go first,” I mumbled to myself; but before making any move I waited for the train to start rolling out of the station.

When that moment finally came I heard the two men outside yell some final, and fairly raw, insults at the stationman: in seconds they would turn and be inside. I took a deep breath, then opened the door quickly and quietly.

Not for nothing had I spend many seasons following the trials and tribulations of New York’s baseball Giants. During afternoons in Central Park I’d developed a healthy batting swing of my own, which I now exercised with the old woman’s cane across the neck and skull of the thug who held the rifle case. The man cried out, but before he could even clutch at the injury I’d put a hand between his shoulder blades and shoved him over the railing of the observation deck. Although the train was still moving fairly slowly, there was no chance

of the man getting back on board—but I was still faced with the second thug, who screamed “What in hell?” as he spun on me.

Suspecting that his first instinct would be to go for my throat, I crouched down low and let him have the silver swan in the groin. The man doubled over for just an instant, and when he rose again he looked more infuriated than disabled by the blow. He threw a fist that glanced off my skull as I leaned out over the railroad tracks to avoid it. The train, I divined from a brief, somewhat dizzy glance downward, was picking up speed. Clumsy even for a man his size, the thug had stumbled when his blow failed to land securely, and as he tried to regain his balance I laid the swan across his cheek, although the move was cramped and didn’t prevent him from coming for me again. I held the stick up with both hands, but my opponent, anticipating another swing, raised his beefy arms to protect either side of his head. Then he grinned maliciously and moved forward.

“Now, you shit,” he grunted, and then he suddenly lunged. I had only one avenue of attack: leveling the stick at his throat, I shot its end into his Adam’s apple sharply, producing a sudden, choked cry and momentarily paralyzing the man. I quickly dropped the stick, grabbed hold of the roof of the deck, pulled myself up, and let the thug have a full kick with both feet. The blow sent him, too, over the railing, and into an embankment by the tracks. There he rolled to a halt, still clutching his throat.

Lowering myself back down I took a few deep, gasping breaths, then looked up to see Kreizler coming through the door.

“Moore!” he said, crouching by me. “Are you all right?” I nodded, still breathing hard, as Laszlo looked into the distance behind us. “Your condition certainly seems preferable to the state *those* two are in. However, if you’re able to walk I suggest you get back inside—that woman’s gone into hysterics. She thinks you’ve stolen her walking stick, and she’s threatening to send for the authorities when we reach our next stop.”

With my pulse finally beginning to calm, I straightened out my clothes, then picked up the walking stick and headed into the car. Stumbling a bit as I walked down the aisle, I approached the old woman.

“Here you are, madam,” I said, cordially if still a bit breathlessly. She drew back in fear. “I only wanted to admire it in the sunlight.”

The woman accepted the stick without saying anything; but as I walked back to my seat I heard her shriek and exclaim: “No—get it away! There’s *blood* on it, I tell you!”

Collapsing with a groan, I was joined by Kreizler, who offered me his flask. “I can only suppose that those were *not* men to whom you owe a gambling debt,” he said.

I shook my head and had a drink. “No,” I breathed. “Connor’s boys. More than that I can’t tell you.”

“Did they really intend to *kill* us, do you think?” Laszlo wondered. “Or simply to frighten us?”

I shrugged. “I doubt we’ll ever know. And frankly, I’d rather not talk about it just at the moment. Besides, we were in the midst of a very important discussion, before they butted in…”

The conductor soon appeared, and as we bought two tickets to New York from him, I began to cross-examine Laszlo about the whole Mary Palmer business, not because I had any trouble believing it—no one who’d ever met the girl would have had any trouble believing it—but because, on the one hand, it soothed my nerves, and, on the other, it disarmed Kreizler so thoroughly and refreshingly. All the dangers we’d faced that day, indeed all the grimness of our investigation generally, somehow shrank in significance as Laszlo very tenuously revealed his personal hopes for the future. It was an unfamiliar sort of conversation for him, and difficult in many ways; but never had I seen the man look or sound so completely human as he did on that train ride.

And never would I see him so again.

CHAPTER 36

Our train, a local to begin with, made abominably poor time, so that when we stumbled out of the Grand Central Depot the first hints of dawn were beginning to show in the eastern sky. After agreeing that the long job of interpreting the information we'd gotten from Adam Dury could wait until that afternoon, Kreizler and I got into separate cabs and headed for our respective homes to get some sleep. All seemed quiet at my grandmother's house when I reached Washington Square, and it was my hope that I'd be able to slip into bed before the morning's activities began. I almost made it, too; but just as I was preparing to undress, having successfully navigated the stairs without making a sound, a light knocking came at my bedroom door. Before I'd given any reply, Harriet's head poked into the room.

"Oh, Mr. John, sir," she said, clearly very upset. "Thank heavens." She came fully into the room, pulling her robe tighter around herself. "It's Miss Howard, sir—she was calling all yesterday evening, and last night, as well."

"Sara?" I said, alarmed at the look on Harriet's usually cheerful face. "Where is she?"

"At Dr. Kreizler's—she said you'd find her there. There's been some sort of—well, I don't know, sir, she didn't explain much of anything, but something terrible's happened, I could tell it from her voice."

I jammed my feet back into my shoes in a rush. "Dr. Kreizler's?" I said, my heart beginning to race. "What in the world's she doing there?"

Harriet wrung her hands vigorously. "Like I say, sir, she didn't tell me—but please hurry, she's called more than a dozen times!"

Like a shot I was back out onto the street. Knowing that I wouldn't find a cab any closer than Sixth Avenue at that hour, I bolted west at the fastest pace I could manage and didn't come to a halt till I'd jumped into a hansom that was parked underneath the El tracks. I gave the driver Kreizler's address and told him the matter was urgent, at which he grabbed his whip and put it to work. As we charged uptown—myself in a kind of fearful daze, too tired and mystified to make sense out of Harriet's statement—I began to feel an occasional splash against my face and leaned out of the cab to look at the sky: heavy clouds had rolled in over the city, staving off the light of daybreak and moistening the streets with a steady rain.

My driver didn't let up for a moment during the trip to Stuyvesant Square, and in a remarkably short time I was standing on the sidewalk in front of Kreizler's house. I gave the cabbie a generous amount of money without asking for change, to which he announced that he would wait for me at the curb, suspecting that I would need another ride soon and not wanting to lose so openhanded a fare at such a slow hour of the morning. I moved cautiously but quickly to the front door of the house, which was pulled open by Sara.

She looked uninjured, for which I was grateful enough to give her a big embrace. "Thank God," I said. "From the way Harriet sounded I was afraid that—" I suddenly pulled back when I caught sight of a man standing behind Sara: white-haired, distinguished, wearing a frock coat and carrying a Gladstone bag. I glanced at Sara again, and noticed that her face was full of an exhausted sadness.

"This is Dr. Osborne, John," Sara said quietly. "An associate of Dr. Kreizler's. He lives nearby."

"How do you do?" Dr. Osborne said to me, without waiting for a reply. "Now, then, Miss Howard, I hope I've been clear—the boy is not to be moved or disturbed in any way. The next twenty-four hours will be crucial."

Sara nodded wearily. "Yes, Doctor. And thank you for being so attentive. If you hadn't been here—"

"I only wish that there was more I could have done," Osborne answered quietly. Then he put his tall hat on his head, nodded to me, and set off. Sara pulled me inside.

"What in hell's happened?" I said, as I followed her up the stairs. "Where's Kreizler? And what's this about a boy? Has Stevie been

hurt?"

"Shush, John," Sara answered, quietly but urgently. "We've got to keep things quiet in this house." She resumed the climb to the parlor. "Dr. Kreizler's—gone."

"Gone?" I echoed. "Gone where?"

Walking into the dark parlor, Sara made a move toward a lamp, but then decided with a wave of her hand to leave it alone. She collapsed onto a sofa, and took a cigarette out of a case on a nearby table.

"Sit down, John," she said; and something about the range of emotions contained in those few words—resignation, sorrow, anger—made me comply instantly. I held out a match for her cigarette and waited for her to go on. "Dr. Kreizler's at the morgue," she finally said, in a smoky breath.

I took in air quickly. "The *morgue*? Sara, what is it, what's happened? Is Stevie all right?"

She nodded. "He will be. He's upstairs, along with Cyrus. We've got two cracked skulls to care for now."

"Cracked skulls?" I parroted again. "How in—" A sudden, sickening rush swept through my gut, as I glanced around the parlor and the adjacent hallway. "Wait a minute. Why are you here? And why are you letting people in and out? Where's Mary?"

Sara didn't answer, at first, just rubbed her eyes slowly and then drew in some more smoke. Her voice, when it reemerged, was curiously faint. "Connor was here. Saturday night, with two of his thugs." The twisting in my stomach became more extreme. "Apparently they'd lost track of you and Dr. Kreizler—and they must have been taking a lot of heat from their superiors, based on the way they were acting." Standing up slowly, Sara strode to the French windows and opened one just a crack. "They forced their way into the house, and shut Mary in the kitchen. Cyrus was in bed, which left Stevie. They asked him where you and Dr. Kreizler were, but—well, you know Stevie. He wouldn't say."

I nodded, and mumbled, "'Go chase yourselves,'" softly.

"Yes," Sara answered. "So—they started in on him. Along with his skull he's got a few broken ribs, and his face is a mess. But it's the head that—well, he'll live, but we don't know yet just what sort of

shape he'll live *in.* Things ought to be clearer by tomorrow. Cyrus tried to get out of bed to help, but he only collapsed in the hallway upstairs and bumped his head again."

Though afraid to ask, I did: "And Mary?"

Sara's arms went up in resignation. "She must've heard Stevie screaming. I can't imagine what else would have made her act so—rashly. She got hold of a knife, and managed to get out of the kitchen. I don't know what she thought she was going to do, but…The knife ended up in Connor's side. Mary ended up at the bottom of the stairs. Her neck was…" Sara's voice trailed off.

"Broken," I finished for her, in a horrified whisper. "She was dead?"

Sara nodded, and then cleared her throat to speak again. "Stevie got to the telephone, and called Dr. Osborne. I came by when I got back from New Paltz last night, and everything was—well, taken care of. Stevie did manage to say that it was an accident. That Connor didn't mean to do it. But when Mary stabbed him he spun around and…"

For long seconds my vision faded, everything around me blending into a kind of vague grayness; then I heard a sound that I'd last detected on the Williamsburg Bridge anchor the night Giorgio Santorelli was killed—the powerful churning of my own blood. My head began to shake, and when I put my hands up to hold it still I noticed that my cheeks were moist. The kinds of memories that usually accompany news of such tragedy—quick, out of sequence, and in some cases silly—flashed through my mind, and when I heard my own voice again I didn't really know where it was coming from.

"It's not possible," I was saying. "It isn't. The coincidence, it doesn't make—Sara, Laszlo was just telling me—"

"Yes," she said. "He told me, too."

I got up, feeling awfully unsteady on my feet, and went to stand by the window with Sara. The dark clouds in the dawn sky were continuing to prevent daybreak from really taking hold of the city. "The sons of bitches," I whispered. "The lousy sons of…Have they got Connor?"

Sara threw the stub of her cigarette out the window, shaking her head. "Theodore's out now, with some detectives. They're searching the hospitals, and all of Connor's known haunts. I'm guessing they won't find him, though. How Connor's men found out you were in

Boston is still a bit of a mystery, though it's probably safe to say they checked the ticket sellers at the depot." Sara touched my shoulder as she continued to stare out the window. "You know," she murmured, "from the very first time I walked into this house, Mary was afraid that something would happen to take him away from her. I tried to help her understand that that something wouldn't be me. But she never seemed to lose the fear." Sara turned and went back across the room to sit down. "Perhaps she was smarter than the rest of us."

I put a hand to my forehead. "It *can't* be…" I breathed again; but on a deeper level I knew that, in fact, it could easily be, given who we were dealing with, and that I'd better start adjusting to the reality of this nightmare. "Kreizler," I said, forcing some kind of strength into my voice. "Kreizler's at the morgue?"

"Yes," Sara answered, taking out another cigarette. "I couldn't tell him what happened—Dr. Osborne did it. He said he's had practice."

I gnashed a new surge of remorse away with my teeth, tightened my fist, and headed for the stairs. "I've got to get over there."

Sara caught my arm. "John. Be careful."

I nodded quickly. "I will."

"No. I mean *really* careful. With him. If I'm right, the effects of this are going to be a lot worse than you may be expecting. Cut him a wide path."

I tried to smile, and put a hand on hers; then I kept on moving, down the stairs and out the door.

My cabbie was still waiting at the curb, and when I appeared he jumped back up onto his hansom smartly. I told him to get me to Bellevue in a hurry, and we sped off at the same lively pace. The rain was beginning to pick up, blown by a strong, warm, westerly wind, and as we bounced up First Avenue I pulled off my cap and tried to use it to shield my face from the water that was spraying off the roof of the cab. I don't remember having any thoughts, as such, during that ride; there were just more quick images of Mary Palmer, the quiet, pretty girl with the remarkable blue eyes who, in the space of just a few hours, had evolved in my mind from housemaid to future wife of a dear friend to no more. There was no sense in what had happened, no sense at all, and even less in trying to create any; I just sat there and let the images fly by.

When I reached the morgue I found Laszlo outside the large iron door in the back that we'd used to enter the building when we'd examined Ernst Lohmann's body. He was leaning against the building, his eyes as wide, vacant, and black as the gaping holes our killer had left in the heads of his victims. Rain was cascading down off a gutter on the edge of the roof above and drenching him, and I tried to pull him away from it. But his body was stiff and intractable.

"Laszlo," I said quietly. "Come on. Get in the cab." I tugged at him a few more times without achieving anything, and then he finally spoke, in a hoarse monotone:

"I will not leave her."

I nodded. "All right. Then let's just stand in the doorway here, you're getting soaked."

His eyes alone moved as he glanced at his clothes; then he nodded once, and stumbled with me into the minimal shelter of the doorway. We stood there for quite some time until, finally, he spoke in the same lifeless voice:

"Did you know—my father—"

I looked at him, my own heart ready to burst at the pain that was in his face, and then nodded. "Yes. I knew him, Laszlo."

Kreizler shook his head in a stiff jerk. "No. Do you know *what* my—father always said to me, when I was—a boy?"

"No. What?"

"That—" The voice was still scraping terribly, as if it were a labor to produce it, but the words began to come faster: "That I didn't know as much as I thought I did. That I thought I knew how people should behave, that I thought I was a better person than he was. But one day—one day, he said, I would know that I wasn't. Until then, I'd be nothing more than an—impostor…"

Once again, I couldn't find a way to tell Laszlo how fully I understood, in light of Sara's discovery, what he was saying; so I simply put a hand to his uninjured shoulder as he began to straighten his clothes absentmindedly. "I have—made arrangements. The mortician will be here soon. Then I've got to get home. Stevie and Cyrus…"

"Sara's looking after them."

His voice became suddenly strong, even somewhat violent: "*I've* got to look after them, John!" He shook a fist before him. "*I've* got to. *I* brought these people into my house. *I* was responsible for their safety. Look at them now—look! Two near dead, and one—one…" He gasped and looked at the iron door, as if he could see right through it to the rusted metal table on which now lay the girl who had embodied his hope of a new life.

Gripping him tighter, I said, "Theodore's out looking—"

"I'm no longer interested in what the commissioner of police is doing," Kreizler answered, quickly and sharply. "Nor in the activities of anyone else in that department." He paused, and then, wincing as he moved his right arm, took my hand from his shoulder and looked away from me. "It's over, John. This wretched, bloody business, this… *investigation.* Over."

I was at something of a loss for words. He seemed perfectly serious. "Kreizler," I finally said, "give yourself a couple of days before you—"

"Before I what?" he answered quickly. "Before I get one of you killed, too?"

"You're not responsible for—"

"Don't *tell* me I'm not responsible for it!" he raged. "Who, then, if not me? It's my own vanity, just as Comstock said. I've been in a blind fury, trying to prove my precious points, oblivious of any danger it might pose. And what have they wanted? Comstock? Connor? Byrnes, those men on the train? They've wanted to stop me. But *I* thought that what I was doing was too important for me to take any note—I thought I knew better! We've been hunting a killer, John, but the killer isn't the real danger—*I* am!" He hissed suddenly and clenched his teeth. "Well, I've seen enough. If I'm the danger then I shall remove myself. Let this man keep killing. It's what they want. He's a part of their order, their precious social order—without such creatures they've no scapegoats for their own wretched brutality! Who am I to interfere?"

"Kreizler," I said, ever more worried, for there was no question now that he meant what he was saying. "Listen to yourself, you're going against everything—"

"No!" he answered. "I'm going *along*! I'll go back to my Institute and

my dead, empty house, and *forget* this case. I'll see to it that Stevie and Cyrus heal and never again face unknown attackers because of my vain schemes. And this bloody society that they've built for themselves can go down the path they have planned for it, and *rot*!"

I stood back a couple of steps, knowing in some part of myself that it was useless to argue with him, but stung by his attitude nonetheless. "All right, then. If self-pity's going to be your solution—"

He swung at me hard with his left arm, but missed badly. "Damn you, Moore!" he seethed, breathing in short, quick contractions. "Damn you and damn them!" He grabbed the iron door and drew it open, then paused to get his breathing under control. Eyes again wide with horror, he stared into the dark, miserable hallway before him. "And damn me, too," he added quietly. The heaving in his chest finally began to subside. "I'm going to wait inside. I would appreciate it if you'd go. I'll arrange to have my things removed from Number 808. I—I'm sorry, John." He entered the morgue, the iron door swinging shut with a crash as he went.

I stood there for a moment, my sodden clothes now starting to cling to my body and limbs. I looked up at the square, feelingless brick buildings around me, and then at the sky. More clouds were being blown in by the westerly wind, which was only picking up pace. In a sudden movement I reached down, tore a bit of grass and earth from the ground beneath me, and then threw it at the black door.

"Damn you *all,* then!" I shouted, holding up my muddy fist; but there was no relief in the exclamation. I let the hand fall slowly, then wiped rainwater from my face and stumbled back to my cab.

CHAPTER 37

Not wanting to see or talk to anyone after I left the morgue, I ordered my cabbie to take me to Number 808 Broadway. The building was fairly deserted, and when I stumbled into our headquarters the only sound I could hear was the blast of rain against the ring of Gothic windows around me. I collapsed onto the Marchese Carcano's divan and stared at the large, note-covered chalkboard, my spirits sinking ever lower. Grief and hopelessness were finally and mercifully overwhelmed by exhaustion, and I fell asleep for most of the dark, gloomy day. But at about five o'clock I shot up to the sound of loud knocking at the front door. Staggering over and opening the thing, I found myself facing a dripping Western Union boy who had a sodden envelope in his hand. I took the message from him and peeled it apart, my lips moving rather idiotically as I read it:

> CAPTAIN MILLER, FORT YATES, CONFIRMS CPL JOHN BEECHAM HAD FACIAL SPASM. CARRIED SIMILAR KNIFE. KNOWN TO CLIMB MOUNTAINS WHEN OFF DUTY. ADVISE.

As I finished reading the wire for a third time, I became aware that the delivery boy was saying something, and I looked up blankly. "What's that?"

"Reply, sir," the boy said impatiently. "Do you want to send a reply?"

"Oh." I thought about it for a moment, trying to decide what the best course would be in light of the morning's developments. "Oh… yes."

“You’ll have to write it down on something dry,” the boy said. “My forms are soaked.”

I walked over to my desk, pulled out a slip of paper, and scribbled a short note: RETURN BY FASTEST TRAIN. EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY. The delivery boy read the thing and gave me a price for its transmission, to which I pulled some money out of my pocket and handed it to him uncounted. The boy’s attitude immediately improved, from which I divined that I’d given him a sizable tip, and then he was back in the elevator and on his way.

There seemed little point in the Isaacsons staying in North Dakota if our investigation was about to come to an abrupt conclusion. Indeed, if Kreizler was serious about dealing himself out of the game there seemed little point in any of us doing anything except cashing in our chips and heading back to our ordinary walks of life. Whatever understanding Sara, the Isaacsons, and I had of our killer was due to Laszlo’s tutelage, and as I looked out over rainswept Broadway, where furtive shoppers were doing their best to avoid rushing carriages and delivery wagons as they tried to get in out of the downpour, I could imagine no way in which we could succeed without his continued leadership.

I’d just reconciled myself to this conclusion when I heard a key turning in the front door. Sara came bustling in, umbrella and grocery parcels in hand, her movements and air nothing like they’d been that morning. She was stepping and talking quickly, even lightly, as if nothing at all had happened.

“It’s a flood, John!” she announced, shaking her umbrella and depositing it in the ceramic stand. She took off her wrap, then lugged her parcels back toward the little kitchen. “You can barely get across Fourteenth Street on foot, and it’s worth your life to try to find a cab.”

I looked back out the window. “Cleans the streets, though,” I said.

“Do you want something to eat?” Sara called. “I’ll get some coffee going, and I brought food—sandwiches will have to do, I’m afraid.”

“Sandwiches?” I answered, not very enthusiastically. “Couldn’t we just go out somewhere?”

“Out?” Sara said, reemerging from the kitchen and coming over to me. “We can’t go out, we’ve got—” She stopped as she caught sight of the Isaacsons’ telegram, then picked it up carefully. “What’s this?”

"Marcus and Lucius," I answered. "They got confirmation on John Beecham."

"But that's wonderful, John!" Sara said in a rush. "Then we—"

"I've already sent a reply," I interrupted, disturbed by her manner. "Told them to get back as soon as they can."

"Even better," Sara said. "I doubt if there's much more for them to discover out there, and we'll need them here."

"Need them?"

"We've got work to do," Sara answered simply.

My shoulders drooped with the realization that my worries about her attitude had been well founded. "Sara, Kreizler told me this morning that—"

"I know," she answered. "He told me, as well. What of it?"

"What of it? It's over, that's what of it. How are we supposed to go on without him?"

She shrugged. "As we went on with him. Listen to me, John." Grabbing hold of my shoulders, Sara led me over to my desk and sat me on it. "I know what you're thinking—but you're wrong. We're good enough now without him. We can finish this."

My head had started shaking even before she finished this statement. "Sara, be serious—we don't have the training, we don't have the background—"

"We don't need any more than we have, John," she answered firmly. "Remember what Kreizler himself taught us—context. We don't need to know everything about psychology, or alienism, or the history of all similar cases to finish this job. All we need to know is *this* man, his *particular* case—and we do, now. In fact, when we put together what we've gathered during the last week, I'll bet that we know him as well as he knows himself—perhaps even better. Dr. Kreizler was important, but he's gone now, and we don't need him. You can't quit. You mustn't."

There were undeniable bits of truth in what she was saying, and I took a minute to digest them; but then my head began to shake again. "Look, I know how much this opportunity means to you. I know how

much it could have helped you convince the department—"

I shut up instantly as she took a good cut at my shoulder with her right fist. "Damn it, John, don't insult me! Do you honestly think I'm doing this just for the opportunity? I'm doing it because I want to sleep soundly again someday—or have your little trips up and down the eastern seaboard made you forget?" She dashed over and grabbed some photographs off of Marcus's desk. "Remember these, John?" I glanced down only briefly, knowing what she held: pictures of the various crime scenes. "Do you really think *you're* going to spend many easy hours if you stop now? And what happens when the next boy is killed? How will you feel then?"

"Sara," I protested, my voice rising to match hers, "I'm not talking about what I'd *prefer* here! I'm talking about what's *practical.*"

"How practical is it to walk away?" she shouted back. "Kreizler's only doing it because he *has* to—he's been hurt, hurt as badly as anyone can be, and this is the only way he can find to respond. But that's *him,* John. *We* can go on! We've *got* to go on!"

Letting her arms fall to her sides, Sara took several deep breaths, then smoothed her dress, walked across the room, and pointed to the right side of the chalkboard. "The way I see it," she said evenly, "we've got three weeks to get ready. We can't waste a minute."

"Three weeks?" I said. "Why?"

She went over to Kreizler's desk and picked up the thin volume with the cross on its cover. "The Christian calendar," she said, holding it up. "I assume you found out why he's following it?"

I shrugged. "Well, we may have. Victor Dury was a reverend. So the —the—" I tried to find an expression, and finally latched onto one that sounded like something Kreizler would have said: "The rhythms of the Dury house, the cycle of the family's life, would naturally have coincided with it."

Sara's mouth curled up. "You see, John? You weren't entirely wrong about a priest being involved."

"And there was something else," I said, thinking back to the questions that Kreizler had put to Adam Dury just as we were leaving the latter's farm. "The reverend was fond of holidays—gave some rattling good sermons, apparently. But his wife…" I tapped a finger slowly on my desk, considering the idea; then, realizing its

importance, I looked up. “It was his wife who was Japheth’s chief tormentor, according to his brother—and she gave the boys hellfire and brimstone over holidays.”

Sara looked very gratified. “Remember what we said about the killer hating dishonesty and hypocrisy? Well, if his father’s preaching one thing in his sermons, while at the same time, at home…”

“Yes,” I mumbled, “I do see it.”

Sara returned to the chalkboard slowly, and then did something that rather struck me: She picked up a piece of chalk and, without hesitation, jotted down the information I’d given her on the left-hand side of the board. Her handwriting, at that angle, was not quite as neat and practiced as Kreizler’s, but it looked like it belonged there, just the same. “He’s reacting to a cycle of emotional crisis that’s existed all his life,” Sara said confidently, setting the chalk back down. “Sometimes the crises are so severe that he kills—and the one he’ll reach in three weeks may be the worst of all.”

“So you’ve said,” I answered. “But I don’t remember there being any significant holy days in late June.”

“Not significant for everyone,” Sara said, opening the calendar. “But for him…”

She held the book out to me, pointing to one page in particular. I looked down to see the notation for Sunday, June 21st: The Feast of Saint John the Baptist. My eyes jumped open.

“Most churches don’t make much of a to-do about it anymore,” Sara said quietly. “But—”

“Saint John the Baptist,” I said quietly. “Water!”

Sara nodded. “Water.”

“Beecham,” I whispered, making a connection that, though perhaps a long shot, was nonetheless apparent: *“John Beecham…”*

“What do you mean?” Sara asked. “The only Beecham I found any mention of in New Paltz was a George.”

It was my turn to go to the board and pick up the chalk. Tapping it on the boxed-off area marked THE MOLDING VIOLENCE AND/OR MOLESTATION, I explained at high speed: “When Japheth Dury was eleven, he was

attacked—raped—by a man his brother worked with. A man who'd befriended him, a man he trusted. That man's name was *George* Beecham." A small, urgent sound came out of Sara, and one of her hands went to her mouth. "Now, *if* Japheth Dury, in fact, took the name Beecham after the killings, in order to begin a new life—"

"Of course," Sara said. "He *became* the tormentor!"

I nodded eagerly. "And why the name John?"

"The Baptist," Sara answered. "The purifier!"

I laughed once and wrote these thoughts down in the appropriate segments of the board. "It's just speculation, but—"

"John," Sara said, admonishing me good-humoredly. "That entire *board* is just speculation. But it *works.*" I set the chalk down and turned back around to find Sara absolutely beaming. "You see now, don't you?" she said. "We've got to do it, John—we've *got* to keep going!"

And of course we did.

So began twenty of the most extraordinary and difficult days of my life. Knowing that the Isaacsons would not get back to New York any earlier than Wednesday night, Sara and I set ourselves the task of sharing, interpreting, and recording all the information we'd gathered during the previous week, in order to have it ready for the detective sergeants to quickly assimilate on their return. We spent most of the next few days together at Number 808, going over facts and—on a less obvious, unacknowledged level—reshaping the atmosphere and spirit of our headquarters so as to ensure that Kreizler's would not become a crippling absence. All obvious signs and reminders of Laszlo's presence were quietly put aside or removed, and we pushed his desk into a corner, so that the other four could be re-formed into a smaller (or rather, as I chose to view it, tighter) ring. Neither Sara nor I were particularly happy about doing any of this, but we tried not to be sad or maudlin, either. As always, focus was the key: so long as we kept our vision steadily fixed on the twin goals of preventing another murder and capturing our killer, we found we could get through even the most painful and disorienting moments of transition.

Not that we simply wiped Kreizler out of our minds; on the contrary, Sara and I spoke of him several times, in an effort to fully comprehend just what twists and turns his mind had taken after Mary's death. Naturally, these conversations involved some discussion

of Laszlo's past; and thinking about the unfortunate reality of Kreizler's upbringing as I talked with Sara dispelled the last of the anger I felt over Laszlo's abandonment of the investigation, to the extent that on Tuesday morning I actually went, without telling Sara, back to Kreizler's house.

I made the trip in part to see how Stevie and Cyrus were doing, but primarily to smooth over the bumps and cracks that had been left by Laszlo's and my parting at Bellevue. Thankfully, I found that my old friend was also anxious to put things right in this regard, though he was still quite determined not to return to our investigation. He spoke of Mary's death quietly, making it easy for me to appreciate how thoroughly his spirit had been savaged by the incident. But more than that, I think it was the shattering of his confidence that prevented him from coming back to the hunt. For only the second time in his life that I could recall (the first having occurred during the week before we visited Jesse Pomeroy), Laszlo seemed to truly doubt his own judgment. And while I didn't agree with his self-indictment, I certainly couldn't blame him. Every human being must find his own way to cope with such severe loss, and the only job of a true friend is to facilitate whatever method he chooses. And so I finally shook Laszlo's hand and accepted his determination to bow out of our work, even though it pained me deeply. We said goodbye, and I wondered again how we would ever get along without him; yet before I'd even gotten clear of his front yard, my thoughts had turned back to the case.

Sara's trip to New Paltz, I learned during those three days before the Isaacsons returned, had confirmed many of our hypotheses concerning our killer's childhood years. She'd been able to locate several of Japheth Dury's contemporaries, and they acknowledged—rather ruefully, to give them their due—that the boy had suffered much mockery because of his violent facial spasms. Throughout his years at school (and as Marcus had speculated, the New Paltz school had taught the Palmer system of handwriting at that time), as well as on those special occasions when he accompanied his parents into town, Japheth would often be set on by gangs of children who made a great game out of competing to see who could most accurately imitate the boy's tic. This last was no ordinary twitch, the now-grown citizens of New Paltz had assured Sara: it was a contraction so severe that Japheth's eyes and mouth would be pulled around almost to the side of his head, as if he were in terrible pain and were about to break into violent tears. Apparently—and strangely—he never struck back when attacked by the children of New Paltz, and never turned a spiteful tongue on anyone who teased him; rather, he always went silently about his business, so that after a few years the children in town grew

bored of tormenting him. Those few years, however, had apparently been enough to poison Japheth's spirit, coming as they did on top of a lifetime's coexistence with someone who never tired of hounding him: his own mother.

Sara didn't crow excessively about the extent to which she'd been able to predict the character of that mother, though God knows she would've been justified in doing so. Her interviews in New Paltz had supplied her with only a general description of Mrs. Dury, but she'd read enough into those generalities to be very encouraged. Japheth's mother was well remembered in the town, partly for her zealous advocacy of her husband's missionary work, but even more vividly for her harsh, cold manner. Indeed, it was widely held among New Paltz's other matrons that Japheth Dury's facial spasms had been the result of his mother's relentless badgering (thus demonstrating that folk wisdom can sometimes attain the status of psychological insight). Encouraging as all this was, it gave Sara only a fraction of the satisfaction offered by Adam Dury's account. Almost every one of Sara's hypotheses—from our killer's mother having been an unwilling bride, to her dislike of childbearing, to her scatological harassment of her son from an early age—had been borne out by what Laszlo and I had heard in Dury's barn; Adam had even told us that his mother often told Japheth he was a dirty red Indian. A woman had indeed played a "sinister role" in our killer's life; and while the reverend's may have been the hand that actually administered beatings in the Dury household, Mrs. Dury's behavior appeared to have represented another sort of punishment to both her sons, one that was just as powerful. Indeed, Sara and I felt confident in saying that if one of Japheth's parents had been the "primary" or "intended" victim of his murderous rage, it was almost certainly his mother.

In sum, it now seemed certain that we were dealing with a man whose fantastic bitterness toward the most influential woman in his life had led him to shun the company of women generally. This left us with the question of why he should have chosen to kill boys who dressed up and behaved like females, rather than *de facto* women. In coming up with an answer to this riddle, Sara and I were led back to our earlier theory that the victims all possessed character traits not unlike the killer's own. The hateful relationship between Japheth Dury and his mother must, we reasoned, have spilled over into self-hatred, as well—for how could any boy despised by his mother fail to question his own worth? Thus Japheth's anger had crossed sexual lines, becoming a sort of hybrid, or mongrel; and it had found its only release in destroying boys who embodied, in their behavior, similar ambiguity.

The final step in Sara's and my process of assembling our recently collected clues was the fleshing out of our killer's transformation from Japheth Dury into John Beecham. Sara had learned little about George Beecham in New Paltz—he'd lived in the town for just a year, and only appeared in local records because he'd voted in the 1874 congressional election—but we were fairly sure that we understood the selection of the name, nonetheless. Since the beginning of our investigation, it had been clear to all of us that we were dealing with a sadistic personality, one whose every action betrayed an obsessive desire to change his role in life from that of the victim to that of the tormentor. It was perversely logical that, as a way of initiating and symbolizing this transformation, he should alter his name to that of a man who had once betrayed and violated him; and it was just as logical that he should keep that name when he began to murder children who apparently trusted him in just the way that he had once trusted George Beecham. There was a clear sense that, careful as the killer doubtless was to cultivate that trust, he despised his victims for being foolish enough to give it. Again, he hoped to eradicate an intolerable element of his own personality by eradicating mirror reflections of the child he'd once been.

And so Japheth Dury had become John Beecham, who, according to the assessments of his doctors at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, was highly sensitive to scrutiny of any kind, and also harbored at least strong feelings (if not outright delusions) of persecution. It was unlikely that these traits of personality had been much ameliorated after his release from St. Elizabeth's in the late summer of 1886, since that release had been secured through the exploitation of a legal technicality and against the doctors' wishes; and if indeed John Beecham was our killer, then, in fact, his suspicion, hostility, and violence had only worsened over the years. Sara and I determined that in order for Beecham to have gained the thorough familiarity with New York that he evidently had, he must have come to the city very soon after his release from St. Elizabeth's, and stayed in it ever since. There was cause for hope in this supposition, because he'd probably had contact with a good many people over the course of ten years, and become, in some neighborhood or walk of life, a familiar character. Of course, we didn't know precisely what he looked like; but, starting with the physical characteristics that we'd theorized early on, and then refining them by using Adam Dury as a physical model, we believed we could concoct a description that, in conjunction with the name John Beecham, would make identification a fairly easy matter. Of course, there was no guarantee that he was still using the name John Beecham; but both Sara and I believed that, given what the name

meant to him, he had continued and would continue to do so, until forced to stop.

That was about all the hypothesizing we could do, pending the Isaacsons' return. Wednesday evening arrived, however, without our having had any word from the detective sergeants, and so Sara and I decided to attend to another unpleasant task: that of convincing Theodore to allow us to go on with the investigation in spite of Kreizler's departure. We both suspected that this wasn't going to be easy. It had only been Roosevelt's great respect for Kreizler that had allowed him to consider the idea in the first place (that, and his propensity for unorthodox solutions). Having spent the beginning of the week searching for Connor, as well as attending to the ongoing battle between the forces of reform and corruption at Police Headquarters, Roosevelt remained unapprised of developments within our investigation as of Wednesday evening; but, knowing that he would learn the truth from either Kreizler or the Isaacsons eventually, Sara and I decided to take the bear by the ears and tell him ourselves.

Anxious to avoid stirring up a potentially dangerous new round of speculation among the journalists and detectives at headquarters, we elected to visit Theodore at his home. He and his wife, Edith, had recently rented a town house at 689 Madison Avenue that belonged to Theodore's sister, Bamie, a comfortable, well-furnished home that was nonetheless inadequate to the task of containing the antics of the five Roosevelt children. (It must be remembered, in fairness, that the White House itself would soon prove similarly inadequate.) Knowing that Theodore generally made sure to be home for dinner with his brood, Sara and I took a hansom up Madison Avenue to Sixty-third Street at about six o'clock, mounting the steps of Number 689 at sunset.

Before I'd even rapped on the door the sounds of youthful mayhem became audible from within. The front portal was eventually opened by Theodore's second son, Kermit, who at the time was six years old. He wore the traditional white shirt, knickers, and longish hair of a boy of his age during that era; but in his right fist he rather ominously held what I supposed to be the horn of an African rhinoceros, mounted on a heavy stand. His face was all defiance.

"Hello, Kermit," I said with a grin. "Is your father at home?"

"No one shall pass!" the boy shouted grimly, staring me in the eye.

I lost my grin. "I beg your pardon?"

“No one shall pass!” he repeated. “I, Horatio, will guard this bridge!”

Sara let out a small laugh and I nodded in acknowledgment. “Ah. Yes, Horatio at the bridge. Well, Horatio, if it’s all the same to you…”

I took a step or two into the house, to which Kermit raised the rhino horn and banged it down with surprising force on the toes of my right foot. I let out a sharp cry of pain, prompting Sara to laugh harder, as Kermit again declared, *“No one shall pass!”*

Just then Edith Roosevelt’s pleasant but firm voice echoed in from somewhere to the rear of the house: “Kermit! What’s going on out there?”

Kermit’s eyes suddenly went round with apprehension, and then he spun and made for the nearby staircase, hollering “Retreat! Retreat!” as he went. With the pain in my toes beginning to subside I marked the approach of a rather serious-looking young girl of four or so: Theodore’s younger daughter, Ethel. She was carrying a large picture book full of vivid zoological illustrations and walking with evident purpose; but when she caught sight first of Sara and me and then of Kermit vanishing up the stairs, she paused, flicking a thumb in her brother’s direction.

“Horatio at the bridge,” she droned, rolling her eyes and shaking her head. Then she put her face back in the book and continued her progress down the hall.

Suddenly a doorway to our right burst open, producing a rotund, uniformed, and clearly terrified maid. (There were very few servants in the Roosevelt household: Theodore’s father, a prodigious philanthropist, had given away much of the family fortune, and Theodore supported his family primarily through his writing and his meager salary.) The maid seemed oblivious of Sara’s and my presence as she dashed over to take refuge behind the open front door.

“No!” she screamed, to no one that I could see. “No, Master Ted, I will not do it!”

The hall doorway through which the maid had appeared thereupon disgorged an eight-year-old boy who wore a solemn gray suit and spectacles much like Theodore’s. This was Ted, the oldest son, whose status as scion of the family was amply demonstrated not only by his appearance, but by a rather intimidating young barred owl that sat perched on his shoulder, as well as by a dead rat that he held by its

tail in one gloved hand.

"Patsy, you really are being ridiculous," Ted said to the maid. "If we don't teach him what his natural prey is, we'll never be able to send him back into the wild. Just hold the rat above his beak—" Ted stopped as he finally became aware that there were two callers standing in the doorway. "Oh," he said, his eyes brightening behind the spectacles. "Good evening, Mr. Moore."

"Evening, Ted," I answered, shying away from the owl.

The boy turned to Sara. "And you're Miss Howard, aren't you? I met you at my father's office."

"Well done, Master Roosevelt," Sara said. "It seems you have a good memory for detail—a scientist needs one."

Ted smiled very self-consciously at that, then remembered the rat in his hand. "Mr. Moore," he said quickly, with renewed enthusiasm. "Do you think you could take this rat—here, by the tail—and hold it about an inch above Pompey's beak? He's not used to the sight of prey, and it sometimes scares him—he's been living on strips of raw beefsteak. I've got to have a free hand to make sure he doesn't fly off."

One less accustomed to life in the Roosevelt household might've balked at this request; I, however, having been present for many such scenes, simply sighed, took the rat by the tail, and positioned it as Ted had requested. The owl spun his head around once or twice rather bizarrely, then lifted his large wings and flapped them in apparent confusion. Ted, however, had a good hold of the talons with his gloved hand, and proceeded to make some hooting, squealing sounds that seemed to calm the bird. Eventually Pompey turned his remarkably flexible neck so that his beak was pointing directly at the ceiling, grabbed the rat by the head, and proceeded to swallow the thing, tail and all, in a half-dozen gruesome gulps.

Ted grinned wide. "Good boy, Pompey! That's better than boring old steak, isn't it? Now all you've got to do is learn to catch them for yourself, and then you can go off and be with your friends!" Ted turned to me. "We found him in a hollow tree in Central Park—his mother'd been shot, and the other hatchlings were already dead. He's come along fine, though."

"Look out, below!" came a sudden cry from the top of the stairs, at which Ted's face grew very anxious and he hustled back out of the hall with his owl. The maid tried to follow him, but became transfixed

by the sight of a large white mass that was bulleting down from the second floor atop the staircase bannister. Unable to decide which way to run, the maid finally crumpled to the floor and covered her head with a shriek, narrowly avoiding what might have been a very grim collision with Miss Alice Roosevelt, twelve years old. Slamming from the bannister to a carpet on the floor with well-practiced skill and a howling laugh, Alice proceeded to jump up, straighten her rather busy white dress, and hold a taunting finger out to the maid.

"Patsy, you great goose!" she laughed. "I've told you, never stay still, you've *got* to pick a direction and run!" Turning the delicate, pretty face that would, in several years, cut a swath through Washington's most eligible bachelors like a scythe through so much wheat, Alice faced Sara and me, smiling and curtsying ever so slightly. "Hello, Mr. Moore," she said, with the confidence of a girl who knows, even at twelve, the power of her own charms. "And is this *really* Miss Howard?" she went on, more excitedly and ingenuously. "One of the women who works at headquarters?"

"It is, indeed," I replied. "Sara, meet Alice Lee Roosevelt."

"How do you do, Alice?" Sara said, extending a hand.

Alice was all mature confidentiality as she took Sara's hand and replied, "I know that a lot of people think it's scandalous that women are working at headquarters, Miss Howard, but *I* think it's *bully*!" She held up a small satchel, the drawstring of which was wrapped around her wrist. "Would you like to see my snake?" she asked, and before the somewhat startled Sara could answer Alice had produced a wriggling, two-foot garter snake.

"Alice!" It was Edith's voice again, and this time I turned to see her lithely moving down the hallway toward us. "Alice," she repeated, in the careful but authoritative voice she used with this, the only child in the house that was not her own. "I *do* think, dear, that we might let newcomers in the house get their things off and sit down before we introduce them to the reptiles. Hello, Miss Howard. John." Edith touched Alice's forehead gently. "*You're* the one I depend on for civilized behavior, you know."

Alice smiled up at Edith and then turned to Sara again, putting the snake back in the satchel. "I'm sorry, Miss Howard. Won't you come into the parlor and sit down? I've so many questions I want to ask you!"

"And I'd love to answer them sometime," Sara said amiably. "But I'm afraid we need to talk to your father for a few minutes—"

"I can't imagine why, Sara," Theodore boomed, as he emerged from his study and into the hallway. "You'll find that the children are the real authorities in this house. You'd be better off talking to them."

At the sound of their father's voice the other Roosevelt children we'd encountered reappeared and mobbed him, each shouting out the events of his or her day in an effort to gain his counsel and approval. Sara and I watched this scene along with Edith, who simply shook her head and sighed, unable to quite comprehend (as was anyone acquainted with the family) the miracle of her husband's relationship to his children.

"Well," Edith finally said to us quietly, still watching her family, "you'd better have pressing business indeed, if you intend to break the power of *that* lobby." Then she turned our way, comprehension evident in her glittering, rather exotic eyes. "Although I understand that *all* your business, these days, is pressing." I nodded once, and then Edith clapped her hands loudly. "All right, my terrible tribe! Now that you've almost certainly woken Archie from his nap, what about washing up for dinner?" (Archie, at two, was the baby of the family; young Quentin, whose death in 1918 would have such a catastrophic effect on Theodore's emotional and physical health, had not yet been born in 1896.) "And no guests that aren't human tonight," Edith went on. "I mean that, Ted. Pompey will be perfectly happy in the kitchen."

Ted grinned. "*Patsy* won't be, though."

Reluctantly but without loud protest the children dispersed, while Sara and I followed Theodore into his book-lined study. Works in progress covered several desks and tables in this ample room, along with a plethora of open reference volumes and large maps. Theodore cleared off two chairs near one particularly large and cluttered desk by the window, and then we all sat down. No longer in the children's presence, Roosevelt seemed to take on a subdued air, one that struck me as odd, given events at headquarters in recent days: Mayor Strong had asked one of Theodore's chief enemies on the Board of Commissioners to resign, and though the man had refused to go without a fight, there was a general feeling that Roosevelt was gaining the upper hand in the struggle. I congratulated him on this, but he just waved me off and put a fist to his hip.

"I'm not at all sure how much it will amount to, John, in the end,"

he said gloomily. “There are times when I feel that the job we have undertaken is not one that can be addressed at the metropolitan level alone. Corruption in this city is like the mythical beast, only instead of seven heads it springs a thousand for every one that is cut off. I don’t know that this administration has the power to effect truly meaningful change.” Such wasn’t the kind of mood that Roosevelt would tolerate for long, however. He picked up a book, slammed it down on his desk, and then looked at us through his pince-nez engagingly. “However, that’s none of your affair. Tell me—what news?”

It didn’t prove quite so easy to get our news out, however; and once Sara and I finally had, Theodore slowly sank into his chair and leaned back, as though his melancholy mood had just been validated.

“I’ve been worried about what Kreizler’s reaction to this outrage would be,” he said quietly. “But I confess I didn’t think that he’d abandon the effort.”

At that point I decided to tell Theodore the entire story of Kreizler’s and Mary Palmer’s relationship in an attempt to make him understand just how crushing an effect Mary’s death had had on Laszlo. Remembering that Theodore had also endured the tragic and early loss of someone very dear to him—his first wife—I expected him to react with sympathy, which he did; but a crease of doubt nonetheless remained lodged in his forehead.

“And you’re saying that you wish to go on without him?” he asked. “You believe you can see it through?”

“We know enough,” Sara answered quickly. “That is, we *will* know enough, by the time the killer strikes again.”

Theodore looked surprised. “And when will that be?”

“Eighteen days,” Sara answered. “The twenty-first of June.”

Folding his hands behind his head, Roosevelt began to rock back and forth slowly as he studied Sara. Then he turned to me. “It’s not just grief that’s caused him to withdraw, is it?”

I shook my head. “No. He’s full of doubts about his own judgment and abilities. I never really understood before how much he’s tortured by that—self-doubt. It’s hidden most of the time, but it goes back…”

“Yes,” Roosevelt said, nodding and rocking. “His father.” Sara and I glanced at each other quickly, both of us shaking our heads to indicate

that we had not divulged the story. Theodore smiled gently. “You remember my bout with Kreizler in the Hemenway Gymnasium, Moore? And the night we had afterwards? At one point he and I were rearguing the question of free will—quite congenially, mind you—and he asked me when I’d learned to box. I told him how my dear father had built me a small gym when I was a boy and taught me that vigorous exercise represented my best chance of overcoming illness and asthma. Kreizler asked if, as an experiment, I thought I could force myself to live a sedate life—to which I replied that everything I’d ever learned and held dear required me to be a man of action. I didn’t realize it right away, but I’d proved his point. Then, out of curiosity, I asked him about his own father, whom I’d often heard mention of in New York. His aspect changed—drastically. I’ll never forget it. He glanced away, and for the first time he seemed afraid to look me in the face—and then he grabbed at that bad arm of his. There was something so instinctive in the way he did it, at the merest mention of his father’s name, that I began to suspect the truth. Needless to say, I was utterly aghast at the thought of what his life had been like. And yet I was fascinated, too—fascinated by how different that life had been from my own. How does the world look, I often found myself wondering, to a young man whose father is his enemy?”

Neither Sara nor I could offer any answer to the question. For several minutes the three of us just sat in silence; and then, from outside, we heard Alice shout vehemently:

“I don’t care if he *is* a *Strix varia varia,* Theodore Roosevelt, Junior! He’s not going to eat my snake!”

That brought quiet laughter from those of us in the study, and got us back to the business at hand.

“So,” Theodore said, with another pound of another book on his desk. “The investigation. Tell me this—now that we have a name and an approximate description, why not make it a standard manhunt and let my men turn the city upside down?”

“And do what when they find him?” Sara replied. “Make an arrest? With what evidence?”

“He’s been a lot smarter than that,” I agreed. “We’ve got no witnesses, and no evidence that would be admissible in court. Speculations, fingerprints, an unsigned note—”

"Which shows at least several signs of deceptive script," Sara threw in.

"And God knows what he'll do if he's captured and then released," I went on. "No, the Isaacsons have said from the beginning that this is going to have to be a *flagrante delicto* case—we'll have to catch him at it."

Theodore accepted all this with several slow nods. "Well," he eventually said, "I fear that presents us with a new set of challenges. Kreizler's departure from the investigation, you may be surprised to learn, won't make things any easier for me. Mayor Strong has learned of the rigor with which I've been searching for Connor, and why. He views that search as another way in which this department might be connected to Kreizler, and has asked that I not jeopardize my position by letting my personal relationship with the doctor make me overly aggressive. He's also heard rumors that the Isaacson brothers are pursuing an independent investigation of the boy-whore murders, and he's ordered me not only to stop them, if the rumors are true, but to proceed with great caution regarding the case generally. You probably haven't heard about the trouble last night."

"Last night?" I said.

Roosevelt nodded. "There was some sort of a gathering in the Eleventh Ward, supposedly to protest the handling of the murders. The organizers were a group of Germans, and they claimed it was a political event—but there was enough whiskey in evidence to float a small ship."

"Kelly?" Sara asked.

"Perhaps," Roosevelt answered. "What's certain is that they were on their way to getting well out of hand before they were broken up. The political implications of this case are growing more serious every day—and Mayor Strong has, I fear, reached that deplorable state where concern over the consequences of action leads to paralysis. He wants no precipitate steps taken in this matter." Theodore paused to give Sara a small, only half-serious frown. "He's also heard rumors, Sara, that you've been working with the Isaacsons—and as you know, there are many who will protest vehemently if they find out that a woman is actively involved in a murder investigation."

"Then I'll redouble my efforts," Sara answered with a coy smile, "to conceal that involvement."

"Hmm, yes," Theodore noised dubiously. He studied us for a few seconds more, then nodded. "Here's what I'll offer you—take the next eighteen days. Find out all you can. But when the twenty-first comes around, I want you to tell me everything you know, so that I can post officers I trust at every potential murder site and avenue of escape." Roosevelt pounded one beefy fist into his other hand. "I will not have another of these butcheries."

I turned to Sara, who gave the deal quick consideration and then nodded certainly.

"We can keep the detective sergeants?" I asked.

"Of course," Roosevelt answered.

"Done." I put my hand forward and Theodore shook it, taking his pince-nez from his nose.

"I only hope you all *have* learned enough," Roosevelt said, as he turned to shake Sara's hand. "The idea of leaving my post without solving this case is not one that I relish."

"You planning to quit, Roosevelt?" I jibed. "Has Platt finally made things too warm for you?"

"Nothing of the sort," he replied gruffly. Then it was his turn to coyly reveal his legion of teeth. "But the conventions are coming up, Moore, and then the election. McKinley will be our party's man, unless I'm mistaken, while the Democrats look as though they'll actually be foolish enough to nominate Bryan—victory will be ours this fall."

I nodded. "Going to campaign, are you?"

Theodore shrugged modestly. "I've been told that I can be of some use—in both New York and the western states."

"And if McKinley should prove grateful for your help…"

"Now, John," Sara chided sarcastically. "You know how the commissioner feels about such speculation."

Roosevelt's eyes went round. "*You,* young lady, have spent too much time away from headquarters—dashed impudence!" Then he relaxed and waved us toward the door. "Go on, get out. I've got a pile of official papers to sort through tonight—being as someone seems to have stolen my secretary."

It was nearly eight o'clock by the time Sara and I got back out onto Madison Avenue; but between the exhilaration of having been allowed to continue our investigation and the warmth of the clear spring night, neither of us felt much like going home. Nor were we in any mood to lock ourselves back up in our headquarters and wait for the Isaacsons to show up, although we were anxious to talk to them as soon as they got back. As we began to stroll downtown a happy compromise occurred to me: we could dine at one of the outdoor tables in front of the St. Denis Hotel, across the avenue from Number 808. Thus positioned, we'd be sure to spot the detective sergeants on their return. This idea suited Sara thoroughly; and as we continued our march down the avenue, she became more thoroughly delighted than I'd ever seen her. There was little of the usual edgy intensity in her manner, though her mind was quite focused and her thoughts were consistently sharp and relevant. The explanation for all this, when it came to me during dinner, wasn't particularly complicated: despite what Theodore had said about the possible official and public reaction to her involvement in the investigation, Sara was, for the moment, her own woman, a professional detective—in fact if not in name. In the days to come we would face many trials and frustrations, and I would have much cause to be grateful for Sara's increasingly good spirits—for it was she more than anyone else who became the driving force behind the continuation of our work.

My consumption of wine that night was such that by the time dinner was over, the hedges that separated our table outside the St. Denis from the sidewalk were proving insufficient to contain my ardent attentions to the many lovely women who were innocently drawn to the still-bright windows of McCreery's store. Sara became quite impatient with my behavior and was on the verge of leaving me to my fate when she caught sight of something across the street. Following her indication I turned around to see a cab pulling up in front of Number 808, from which Marcus and Lucius Isaacson stepped rather wearily. Perhaps it was the wine, or the events of recent days, or even the weather; but I was absolutely overjoyed at the sight of them, and, leaping over the hedges, I dashed across Broadway to offer profuse greetings. Sara followed at a more rational pace. Both Lucius and Marcus had apparently seen a good amount of the sun during their sojourn on the high plains, for their skins had darkened considerably, giving them a warm, healthy look. They seemed very glad to be back, though I wasn't sure they'd stay that way once they heard about Kreizler's resignation.

"It's amazing country out there," Marcus said, as he pulled their bags off of the hansom. "Puts an entirely different perspective on life

in this city, I can tell you that." He sniffed at the air. "Smells a lot better, too."

"We were shot at on one train ride," Lucius added. "A bullet went right through my hat!" He showed us the hole by poking a finger through it. "Marcus says that it wasn't Indians—"

"It wasn't Indians," Marcus said.

"He says that it wasn't Indians, but I'm not so sure, and Captain Miller at Fort Yates said—"

"Captain Miller was just being polite," Marcus interrupted again.

"Well, that may be," Lucius answered. "But he did say—"

"What did he say about Beecham?" Sara asked.

"—he did say that, although most of the larger bands of Indians have been defeated—"

Sara grabbed him. "Lucius. What did he say about Beecham?"

"About Beecham?" Lucius repeated. "Oh. Well. A great deal, actually."

"A great deal that comes down to one thing," Marcus said, looking at Sara. He paused, his large brown eyes full of meaning and purpose. "He's our man—he's got to be."

CHAPTER 38

Tipsy as I was, the Isaacsons' news, related as we got them some food at the St. Denis, sobered me up in a hurry:

Apparently Captain Frederick Miller, now in his early forties, had been assigned to the headquarters of the Army of the West in Chicago as a promising young lieutenant in the late 1870s. He had chafed under the boring strictures of staff life, however, and asked to be sent farther west, where he hoped to see active service. This request was granted and Miller was dispatched to the Dakotas, where he was twice wounded, the second time losing an arm. He returned to Chicago but declined to take up his staff duties again, electing instead to command part of the reserve forces that were kept on hand for civil emergencies. It was in this capacity that, in 1881, he'd first come across a young trooper named John Beecham.

Beecham had told his recruiting officer in New York that he was eighteen at the time of his enlistment, though Miller doubted that this was true—even when the still-green trooper had arrived in Chicago, six months later, he seemed younger than that. However, boys often lie about their age in order to enter the military, and Miller had thought little of it, for Beecham had shown himself to be a good soldier—well disciplined, attentive to detail, and efficient enough to have made corporal within two years. True, his persistent requests to be sent farther west to do some Indian fighting had annoyed Beecham's superiors in Chicago, who weren't particularly anxious to have their better noncommissioned officers lost to the frontier; but overall, Lieutenant Miller had been given little reason to be anything but satisfied with the young corporal's performance until 1885.

In that year, however, a series of incidents in several of Chicago's poorer sections had exposed a disturbing facet of Beecham's

personality. Never a man with many friends, Beecham had taken to going into immigrant neighborhoods during his off-duty hours and offering his services to charitable organizations that dealt with children, particularly orphans. At first this had seemed an admirable way for a soldier to make use of his time—far better than the usual drinking and fighting with local residents—and Lieutenant Miller had not concerned himself with it. After several months, however, he'd noticed a change in Beecham's mood, a decided shift toward the sullen. When Miller asked the corporal about it he received no satisfactory explanation; but soon thereafter the head of one of the charities showed up at the post wanting to talk to an officer. Miller listened as the man asked that Corporal Beecham be prohibited from coming near his orphanage again; when asked why he was making such a request, the man declined to say any more than that Beecham had "upset" several of the children. Miller immediately confronted Beecham, who initially became angry and indignant, declaring that the man from the orphanage was only jealous because the children liked and trusted Beecham more than they did him. Lieutenant Miller, however, could see there was more to the story than that, and pressed Beecham harder; the corporal finally became immensely agitated and blamed Miller and the rest of his superiors for whatever it was that had happened. (Miller never did find out the exact nature of the incidents.) All such trouble could have been avoided, Beecham said, if those officers had complied with his request to be sent west. Miller found Beecham's manner during this conversation alarming enough to warrant sending him on a long leave. Beecham spent that leave mountaineering in Tennessee, Kentucky, and West Virginia.

When he returned to his unit, at the beginning of 1886, Beecham seemed much improved. He was once again the obedient, efficient soldier Miller had first known. This image proved an illusion, however; and it was shattered during the violence that followed the Haymarket Riots in the Chicago area during the first week of May. Sara and I already knew that Beecham had been sent to St. Elizabeth's Hospital after Miller had found him "stabbing" (as the doctors put it) the corpse of a dead striker during the May 5th melee in the northern suburbs; we now learned from the Isaacsons that this "stabbing" had borne a chilling resemblance to the mutilations of both Japheth Dury's parents and the dead children in New York. Revolted and horrified at finding the blood-drenched Beecham standing over a carved-up corpse whose eyes had been gouged out with an enormous knife, Miller had not hesitated to relieve the corporal of duty. Though the lieutenant had seen men driven to acts of blood lust in the West, such behavior was uniformly predicated upon years of savagely violent encounters

with the Indian tribes. Beecham, on the other hand, had no such history, and no such rationalization for his actions. When the regimental surgeon examined Beecham after the affair, he quickly pronounced him unfit for service; and Miller added his hearty concurrence to this report, prompting Beecham's immediate dispatch to Washington.

Thus ended the tale that the Isaacsons brought back from the Dakotas. Having told it without pause, the two brothers had also been unable to eat, and now addressed their food voraciously as Sara and I informed them of all we'd learned in their absence. Then it was time for the hard news about Kreizler and Mary Palmer. Fortunately, Marcus and Lucius had by then both gotten most of their dinner down—the story destroyed what was left of their appetites. Both men were obviously apprehensive about the idea of continuing the investigation without Laszlo; but Sara stepped in with an even stronger sales pitch than the one she'd given me and within twenty minutes had convinced the detective sergeants that we had no other option than to press on. The story they'd brought back only gave her more ammunition with which to prosecute her campaign—for there was now little doubt in any of our minds that we knew the identity and history of our murderer. The question was, could we devise and execute a method of finding him?

By the time we left the little restaurant, at close to three o'clock that morning, we'd managed to convince ourselves that we could. The task was still a daunting one, however, and not to be undertaken until we'd all gotten some sleep. We made directly for our respective domiciles, relishing the prospect of that rest; yet by ten o'clock Thursday morning we were back at Number 808 Broadway and ready to map out a strategy. Both Marcus and Lucius seemed a bit disoriented by the shrinking of our circle of desks from five to four, as well as by the appearance of a new hand on the big chalkboard; but they were, after all, experienced detectives, and when they turned their attention to the case, all extraneous issues eventually became just that.

"If no one else has a particular starting point in mind," Lucius announced, reacquainting himself with the materials on his desk, "I'd like to suggest one." The rest of us mumbled general assent, and then Lucius pointed to the right-hand side of the chalkboard, specifically to the word ROOFTOPS. "Do you remember, John, what you said about the killer after you and Marcus went to the Golden Rule that first time?"

I shuffled through my memories of the visit. "Control," I said,

repeating the word that had come so clearly to me the night we'd stood on the roof of Scotch Ann's miserable hole.

"That's right," Marcus chimed in. "On the rooftops he's consistently displayed thorough self-confidence."

"Yes," Lucius said, standing up and going to the board. "Well, my idea is this: we've spent a lot of time understanding this man's nightmares—the real nightmare that was his past and the mental nightmares that haunt him now. But when he plans and commits these murders, he's not behaving like a tormented, frightened soul. He's aggressive, deliberate. He's *acting,* not just *re*acting—and as we saw in his letter, he's fairly impressed with his own cleverness. Where did he get that?"

"Where did he get what?" I asked, a bit confused.

"That confidence," Lucius answered. "Oh, we can explain the cleverness—in fact, we already have."

"It's deviousness," Sara said. "The kind that harassed children often develop."

"Exactly," Lucius said, bobbing his balding head quickly. Then he produced a handkerchief for the inevitable wiping of his ever-sweaty scalp and brow—I was delighted to see the nervous little move again. "But what about the confidence? Where does a boy with his past get that?"

"Well, the army would've given him some," Marcus answered.

"Yes, some," Lucius judged, pursuing his new role of lecturer with ever more gusto. "But it seems to me that it goes back farther than that. Didn't Adam Dury tell you, John, that the only time his brother's facial spasms calmed was when they were hunting in the mountains?" I affirmed that Dury had told us as much. "Climbing and hunting," Lucius continued. "He seems to be able to relieve his torment and pain only through those activities. And now he's doing it on the rooftops."

Marcus was staring at his brother and shaking his head. "Are you going to tell us what you're talking about? It was one thing to play cat and mouse with Dr. Kreizler, but—"

"*If* you will please give me a minute, thank you very much," Lucius said, holding up a finger. "What I'm saying is that the way to find out what he's doing with his life *now* is to follow the trail of what makes

him feel secure, instead of the trail of his nightmares. He's hunting and killing on the rooftops, and his victims are children—all of which suggests that having control over situations is the most vital thing in his life. We know where the obsession with children comes from. We know about the hunting and trapping. But the rooftops? As of 1886, he hadn't spent much if any time in a major city—yet now he's thoroughly mastered them, so much so that he even trapped *us.* That kind of familiarity would take some time to develop."

"Wait," Sara said, nodding slowly. "I'm beginning to see your point, Lucius. He leaves St. Elizabeth's and wants to go to a place where he can be fairly anonymous—New York is a likely choice. But when he gets here he finds that he's completely unfamiliar with how life works on the streets—the crowds, the noise, the agitation. It's all very strange, perhaps even intimidating. Then he discovers the rooftops. It's a completely different world up there—quieter, slower, fewer people. It's much more what he's used to. And he finds out that there's a lot of jobs that require spending a great deal of time on those rooftops—he barely needs to come back down to the streets at all."

"Except at night," Lucius added quickly, again holding up a finger, "when the city's much less crowded, and he can familiarize himself with it at his own pace. Remember—he hasn't yet killed during the day. He understands the nighttime rhythms thoroughly, but during the day—during the day I'm willing to bet he's up there almost all the time." Lucius's forehead continued to sweat as he quickly went back to his desk and grabbed some notes. "We talked about the idea of a daytime job that keeps him on the rooftops after the Ali ibn-Ghazi murder, but we never did much with it. I've been going back over everything, though, and it seems to me to be the best way to track him at this point."

I groaned once with purpose. "Oh, God, Lucius—do you understand what you're suggesting? We'll have to canvass every charity and mission society, every company that uses salesmen, every newspaper, or medical service. There's got to be a way to narrow it down."

"There is," Marcus said, his tone only slightly more enthusiastic than mine. "But it's still going to involve one hell of a lot of footwork." He got up and crossed over to the large map of Manhattan Island, pointing at the pins that had been stuck into the thing to mark abduction and murder sites. "None of his activities have taken place above Fourteenth Street, which suggests that he's most familiar with the Lower East Side and Greenwich Village. He probably lives as well as works in one of the two areas—our theory that he doesn't have

much money fits in with that. So we can confine our search to people who do business in those neighborhoods."

"Right," Lucius said, indicating the chalkboard again. "And let's not forget all the work we've done. If we're right—if the killer did start out his life as Japheth Dury and later became John Beecham—then he wouldn't apply for just *any* kind of job. Given his character and background, some things would be far more attractive than others. For instance, you mention companies that use salesmen, John—but do you really think the man we've been studying would make much of a salesman, or would even try to get a job like that?"

I was about to argue that anything was possible, but then something suddenly told me that Lucius was right. We'd spent months putting details of personality and behavior to our killer's vague image, and "anything" was most distinctly *not* possible. With a rather strange pang of dread and excitement I realized that I now knew this man well enough to say that he wouldn't have sought a job that would have required him to either curry favor with immigrant tenement dwellers or hawk the shoddy wares of manufacturers and store managers, whom he would almost certainly consider less intelligent than himself.

"All right," I said to Lucius, "but that still leaves a wide range of people—church workers, charity and settlement people, reporters, medical services…"

"You can narrow *them* down, too, John," Lucius urged, "if you just keep thinking. Take the reporters who cover the tenements—you know most of them yourself. Do you really think Beecham's a member of that group? As for the medical services—with Beecham's background? When did he get the training?"

I considered all this, and then shrugged. "Well, all right. So the odds are he's involved with mission or charity work of some kind."

"It *would* be easy for him," Sara said. "He'd have gotten all the religious grounding and terminology from his parents—his father was a powerful orator, after all."

"Fine," I said. "But even if we narrow it down that far, we'll have a hard time checking them all by June 21st—Marcus and I took a week and only got through a fraction. It's completely impractical!"

Impractical it may have been, but there was no way around it. We spent the rest of that day amassing a list of all the charitable and religious organizations that did business in the Lower East Side and

Greenwich Village, then divided the list up into four regional groups. Each of us took one of these sub-listings and headed out the next morning, it no longer being practical to travel in pairs if we hoped to check the dozens of organizations on our rosters. In the first few places I visited that Friday I received a somewhat less than warm reception; and though I hadn't expected anything different, the experience nonetheless filled me with a dread of the days and perhaps weeks to come. Repeated reminders to myself that tedious footwork is often the detective's lot did little good: I'd already gone through one such exercise earlier in our investigation (an effort that had involved trips to some of the same places I was now visiting, though for a different purpose), and taking to the crowded sidewalks again only fixed my attention rather pessimistically on the clock that was ticking down toward the Feast of Saint John the Baptist—just sixteen days away.

One aspect of this latest search did, however, give me cause for optimism: it didn't appear that I was being followed. Nor did I find, when I returned to our headquarters at the end of the day, that any of the others had noticed any disreputable types dogging their steps. We couldn't be certain, of course, but the logical explanation seemed to be that our enemies simply didn't believe we could succeed without Kreizler. Throughout the weekend we saw no trace of Connor or his accomplices, or of anyone else that looked as though they might be working for Byrnes or Comstock. If one had to pursue a tedious yet nerve-racking task, it was certainly preferable to do so without having to look over one's shoulder; although I don't think that any of us ever really stopped taking those looks.

Though we were hopeful that John Beecham had worked for one of the charitable organizations on our list at some point during the last ten years, we didn't think that he'd necessarily visited any of the disorderly houses involved in the killings in an official capacity. It was far more likely, to our way of thinking, that he'd become acquainted with said places as a customer. Thus, though my assignment included those organizations that targeted the poor and wayward on the West Side between Houston and Fourteenth streets, I didn't make any inquiries at the boy-pandering brothels in that neighborhood. I did, however, stop in at the Golden Rule just long enough to pass the new information we'd gathered concerning the killer along to my young friend Joseph. There was an awkward moment, when I arrived, being as I'd never before seen the boy actually practicing his trade. When Joseph caught sight of me he quickly vanished into a vacant room, and for a moment I thought he might not come back out; but finally he did, having taken the time to wipe the paint from his face. He

smiled and waved cheerfully, then listened with a great show of attentiveness as I related my news and asked him to pass it along to his friends. Having concluded my business, and anxious to get on to the many offices in the neighborhood that I had assigned myself to visit that day, I said goodbye and turned to go. Joseph caught me at the door, however, and asked if maybe we could play billiards again sometime. I assented to the idea warmly; and with that tenuous connection between us ever so slightly reinforced, the boy disappeared into the back of the Golden Rule, leaving me to feel the usual remorse at his occupation. But I left quickly, knowing that I had a great deal of work to do and little time for useless rumination.

Every conceivable vice, it seemed, had a society in New York dedicated to its prevention. Some of these were general in their approach, such as the Society for the Prevention of Crime, or the various mission societies, Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, and others. Some, like the All Night Mission, chose to make their continuous accessibility the focus of speeches and leaflets delivered by their roaming agents in the ghettos; others, such as the Bowery Mission, were simply regional in their approach. A few, like the Horse Aid Society and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, didn't concern themselves with human beings at all. (When I came across the names of those organizations, I couldn't help but think back to Japheth Dury's torture and mutilation of animals: it seemed to me that organizations that offered such close contact with helpless beasts, although they made no use of rooftop visitations, might still appeal to our man's sadistic nature. Interviews with their officers, however, produced no results.) Then there were the seemingly infinite number and variety of orphanages, all of which employed roving zealots who were constantly on the lookout for abandoned waifs. Each of these institutions had to be checked especially carefully, given the predilection for such places that John Beecham had exhibited in Chicago.

It was the kind of work that quickly absorbed hours and then days, without producing any profound sense of satisfaction or reassurance that we were doing everything possible to stave off another killing. How many archly sanctimonious churchmen and churchwomen, not to mention their civilian counterparts, did Sara, the Isaacsons, and I have to interview, and for how many tedious hours? It would be impossible to say, nor would there be much point to revealing the numbers even if I knew them—for we learned nothing. All through the following week, each of us forced ourselves again and again through a similar procedure: we'd go to the offices or headquarters of some charitable service, where the simple question of whether a John

Beecham, or anyone of similar appearance and manner, had ever worked there would be answered by long, pious statements about the organization's laudable employees and goals. Only then would the files be checked and a firmly negative reply given, at which the unlucky member of our team might finally escape the place.

If I seem either hostile or cynical in recalling this particular phase of our work, perhaps it's because of a realization that came to me as we reached the end of that second week in June: that the only group of outcasts in the city that didn't seem to have several privately funded and nobly titled societies dedicated to its care and reform was the very one that was currently in such grave danger—child prostitutes. As this lack became more and more apparent to me, I couldn't help but think back to Jake Riis—a man lionized in New York's philanthropic circles—and to his blind refusal to admit or report the facts of Giorgio Santorelli's murder. Riis's deliberate myopia was shared by every official I spoke to, a fact that caused me more irritation every time I encountered it. By the time I came lumbering into Number 808 Broadway late Monday afternoon I was so sick of the fatuous hypocrites who made up New York's charitable community that I was spewing a steady stream of rather violent curses. Having thought our headquarters empty when I came in, I spun round in shock when I heard Sara's voice:

"That's lovely language, John. Though I must say it fairly well describes *my* mood at this point." She was smoking a cigarette and staring alternately at the map of Manhattan and the chalkboard. "We're on the wrong track," she decided in disgust, throwing the stub of her cigarette out an open window.

I collapsed onto the divan with a moan. "You're the one who wants to be a detective," I said. "You ought to know that we could go on like this for months before we get a break."

"We don't have months," Sara answered. "We have until *Sunday*." She continued to stare and shake her head at the map and the board. "And it's not just the monotony that's giving me this feeling." She cocked her head, trying to nail down whatever was flitting through her mind. "Has it occurred to you, John, that none of these organizations seems to *know* very much about the people they're trying to help?"

I propped myself up on an elbow. "What do you mean?"

"I'm not sure," Sara answered. "They just don't seem…

knowledgeable. It doesn't match."

"Match what?"

"Him. Beecham. Look at what he does. He insinuates himself into these boys' lives, and convinces them to trust him—and these are some fairly suspicious and skeptical children, mind you."

I thought quickly of Joseph. "On the outside, maybe," I said. "Inside they're praying for a real friend."

"All right," Sara answered, conceding the point. "And Beecham goes through just the motions required to establish that friendship. As if he knows what they need. These charity people have none of that quality. I tell you, we're on the wrong track."

"Sara, be realistic," I said, getting up and joining her. "What kind of door-to-door organization that deals with large numbers of people takes the time to find out that kind of personal informa—"

And then I froze. Really froze. The simple fact of the matter, I remembered in a numbing rush, was that there was one organization that did take the time to find out just the kind of personal information that Sara was describing. An organization whose headquarters I'd passed every day for the past week without ever making a connection —and an organization whose hundreds of employees were well known for traveling neighborhood rooftops.

"Hell's bloody bells," I mumbled.

"What?" Sara asked urgently, seeing that I was onto something. "John, what've you got?"

My eyes darted to the right side of the chalkboard, specifically to the names BENJAMIN AND SOFIA ZWEIG. "Of course…," I whispered. "Eighteen ninety-two might be a little late—but he might have met them in '90. Or he could've gone back during the revisions, the whole thing was so royally botched—"

"John, damn it, *what* are you talking about?"

I grabbed Sara's hand. "What time is it?"

"Nearly six. Why?"

"Someone may still be there—come on!"

I pulled Sara toward the door without further explanation. She continued to bellow questions and protests, but I refuse to answer any of them as we descended to the street in the elevator and then dashed down Broadway to Eighth Street. Wheeling left, I led Sara to Number 135. Pulling at the door to a staircase that led up to the building's second and third floors, I breathed a sigh of relief on finding that it was still open. I turned back to Sara to find her staring with a smile at a small brass plaque that was screwed to the façade of the building, just next to the doorway:

UNITED STATES BUREAU OF CENSUS

CHARLES H. MURRAY, SUPERINTENDENT

CHAPTER 39

We entered a world of files.

Both of the floors occupied by the Census Bureau were lined with wooden filing cabinets that ran right up to the ceiling and blocked every window. Mobile ladders ran on tracks around the walls of each floor's four rooms, and a desk sat in the center of every chamber. Harsh electrical lights with metal shades were suspended from the ceilings, throwing their glare onto floors composed of bare wood. It was a place without feeling or personality of any kind—a worthy home, in short, for bare, inhuman statistics.

The first occupied desk that Sara and I found was on the third floor. At it sat a fairly young man who wore a banker's visor and an inexpensive but particularly well-pressed suit, the jacket of which was slung over his plain, straight-backed chair. Cuff protectors covered the lower portions of the man's white, starched shirtsleeves, protecting those portions of the garment as the thin, sallow hands protruding from them attacked a folder full of forms.

"Excuse me?" I said, approaching the desk slowly.

The man looked up sourly. "Official hours are over."

"Of course," I answered quickly, recognizing an incorrigible bureaucrat when I saw one. "Had this been official business, I would have come at a more appropriate hour."

The man eyed me up and down, then glanced at Sara. "Well?"

"We're with the press," I answered. "The *Times,* actually. My name is Moore, and this is Miss Howard. I wonder if Mr. Murray is still in?"

“Mr. Murray never leaves the office before six-thirty.”

“Ah. Then he’s still here.”

“He may not want to see you,” the young man said. “The members of the press weren’t exactly helpful last time around.”

I considered the statement, then asked, “You mean in 1890?”

“Of course,” the man answered, as if every organization in the world operated on a ten-year schedule. “Even the *Times* made ridiculous allegations. After all, we can’t be responsible for every bribe and falsified report, can we?”

“Naturally not,” I said. “Mr. Murray would be—”

“Superintendent Porter, the national chief, actually had to resign in ’93,” the man went on, still glowering at me with an injured, accusing look. “Did you know that?”

“Actually,” I answered, “I’m a police reporter.”

The man removed his cuff protectors. “I only mention it,” he continued, eyes burning at the center of the shadow thrown on his face by the banker’s visor, “to show that the main problems were in Washington, not here. No one in this office had to resign, Mr. Moore.”

“I’m sorry,” I said, forbearance becoming an ever more difficult task, “but we’re in a bit of a hurry, so if you could just point me toward Mr. Murray…”

“I’m Charles Murray,” the man answered flatly.

Sara and I glanced at each other quickly, and then I let out a perhaps impolitic sigh, realizing what we were up against with this fellow. “I see. Well, Mr. Murray, I wonder if you might be able to check your employment records for the name of a man we’ve been trying to find.”

Murray eyed me from under his visor. “Identification?” I handed him some and he leveled it just a few inches from his face, as if he were checking a piece of counterfeit currency. “Hmm,” he noised. “I suppose it’s all right. Can’t be too careful, though. Anyone might come in here and claim to be a newspaperman.” He handed it back to me, and then turned to Sara. “Miss Howard?”

Sara's face went blank as she scrambled for an answer. "I'm afraid I have no credentials, Mr. Murray. I serve in a secretarial capacity."

Murray didn't look entirely satisfied with that, but he nodded once and turned back to me. "Well?"

"The man we're looking for," I said, "is called John Beecham." The name brought no change at all in Murray's impassive expression. "He's just over six feet tall, with thinning hair and a bit of a facial tic."

"A bit of one?" Murray said evenly. "If he's got a bit of a facial tic, Mr. Moore, I wouldn't like to see an *entire* one."

Again I had that feeling that had swept into me in Adam Dury's barn: the coursing, exultant burn that accompanied the twin realizations that we were on the trail and the trail was still warm. I gave Sara a quick glance, noting that her first experience of that feeling was proving as difficult to control as mine had been.

"Then you know Beecham?" I asked, my voice quavering a bit.

Murray nodded once. "Or rather I *did* know him."

Cold disappointment poured over my hot sensation of triumph for an instant. "He doesn't work for you?"

"He did," Murray answered. "I dismissed him. Last December."

Hope surged again. "Ah. And how long had he been here?"

"Is he in some sort of trouble?" Murray asked.

"No, no," I said quickly, realizing that I hadn't bothered, in my enthusiasm, to work out a plausible cover story for my questions. "I—that is, it's his brother. He may be involved in a—a—land speculation scandal. I thought Mr. Beecham might be able to help us find him, or would at least care to make a statement."

"Brother?" Murray queried. "He never mentioned a brother." I was about to reply to this remark with another fabrication, when Murray went on: "Not that *that's* any indication. Not a talkative man, John Beecham. I never knew much about him—certainly nothing about his private affairs. Always a very proper, respectable person. Which was why I found it remarkable…" Murray's voice trailed off and he tapped a long, bony finger on his chair for a few seconds as he examined first me and then Sara again. Finally he stood up, went to one of the rolling

ladders, and sent it down its track to the far end of the room with a sudden, hard shove. “He was hired in the spring of 1890,” Murray called, as he followed and then mounted the ladder. Pulling out one wooden drawer near the ceiling, he ran through it for a file. “Beecham applied for a job as an enumerator.”

“I beg your pardon?”

“An enumerator,” Murray answered, coming back down the ladder with a large envelope in one hand. “The men who do the actual counting and interviewing for the census. I hired nine hundred such men in June and July of 1890. Two weeks’ work, twenty-five dollars a week. Each man was required to fill out an application.” Opening the envelope, Murray pulled out a folded paper and handed it to me. “Beecham’s,” he said.

Trying to disguise my eagerness, I scanned the document as Murray summarized it: “He was quite qualified—just the sort of man we look for, actually. University education, unmarried, good references—all powerful recommendations.”

And so they would have been, I thought as I studied the document, had they been even remotely legitimate. The information before my eyes represented a litany of lies and an impressive set of forgeries; provided, of course, that there weren’t two John Beechams with chronic facial spasms roaming around the United States. (I wondered for a moment how high Alphonse Bertillon’s system of anthropometry would have put *those* odds.) Sara was looking over my shoulder at the application, and when I turned to her she nodded as if to acknowledge that she, too, had drawn the obvious conclusion from it: that in 1890, as before and after that year, Beecham was sharpening his talent for elaborate deception.

“You’ll see his address at the head of the form,” Murray continued. “At the time I dismissed him, he was still living in the same rooms.”

At the top of the sheet was written, in a hand that I recognized from the note we’d studied weeks earlier, “23 Bank Street”—near the center of Greenwich Village. “Yes,” I said slowly. “Yes, I see. Thank you.”

Looking somewhat perturbed by Sara’s and my continued interest in the application, Murray plucked the thing out of my hands and slipped it back into the large envelope. “Anything else?” he asked.

“Else?” I answered. “Oh, no, I don’t think so. You’ve been very helpful, Mr. Murray.”

"Good evening, then," he said, sitting back down and pulling on his cuff protectors.

Sara and I moved to the door. "Oh," I said, doing my best to feign an afterthought. "You say you dismissed Beecham, Mr. Murray. Might I inquire why, if he was so well qualified?"

"I don't trade in gossip, Mr. Moore," Murray answered coldly. "Besides, your business is with his brother, is it not?"

I tried another tack: "I trust he didn't do anything untoward while he was working in the Thirteenth Ward?"

Murray grunted once. "If he had, I hardly would have promoted him from enumerator to office clerk and kept him on for another five years —" Murray caught himself and jerked his head up. "Just a minute. How did you know he was assigned to the Thirteenth Ward?"

I smiled. "It's of no consequence. Thank you, Mr. Murray, and good evening."

Grabbing Sara by the wrist, I started back down the stairs quickly. I could hear Murray's chair backing up, and then he appeared at the stairway door.

"Mr. Moore!" he called angrily. "Stop, sir! I demand to know how you knew that information! Mr. Moore, do you hear—"

But we were already out the door. I kept a firm grip on Sara's wrist as we headed west, though it wasn't necessary for me to pull her along —she was moving at a quick, exuberant pace, and by the time we reached Fifth Avenue she had started to laugh out loud. As we came to a halt and waited for a gap in the evening traffic on the avenue to appear, Sara suddenly threw her arms around my neck.

"John!" she said breathlessly. "He's *real,* he's *here*—my God, we know where he *lives*!"

I returned her embrace, though there was caution in my voice: "We know where he *lived.* It's June now—he was dismissed in December. Six months without a job may have changed a lot of things—his ability to pay rent in a decent neighborhood, for one."

"But he could've gotten another job," Sara said, her jubilation fading a bit.

"Let's hope so," I answered, as the traffic in front of us thinned. "Come on."

"But how?" Sara called as we stepped into the avenue. "How did you think of it? And what was all that about the Thirteenth Ward?"

As we kept marching farther west toward Bank Street, I explained my line of reasoning to Sara. The 1890 census, I'd remembered hearing from friends of mine who'd reported on it, had indeed been the cause of a great scandal in New York (and the nation generally) when it was conducted during the summer and fall of that year. The chief causes of said scandal had been, not surprisingly, the city's political bosses, whose power stood to be affected by the results of the count and who had tried to influence every stage of the proceedings. Many of the nine hundred men who'd shown up at Charles Murray's Eighth Street offices to apply for positions as enumerators in July of 1890 had been agents of either Tammany Hall or Boss Platt, and they had been instructed by their superiors to tailor their returns so as to ensure that congressional districts loyal to their respective political parties weren't redrawn in a way that would cause them to lose power in state and national affairs. Sometimes this had meant inflating the count of a given district, a job that entailed manufacturing the vital statistics and backgrounds of nonexistent citizens. For enumerators, apparently, were far more than simple numbers men: their work entailed careful interviews with a cross section of their subjects, the purpose being to determine not only how many citizens the nation had but also what sorts of lives they led. These interviews included personal questions that might, as one of my colleagues at the *Times* had put it in an article, "under other circumstances have seemed quite impertinent." The flood of false information that had come into Superintendent Murray's office from Democratic and Republican agents had been perforce imaginative and often impossible to distinguish from real returns. Such behavior hadn't been confined to New York, as I say, though as usual New York had taken the trend to almost absurd extremes. As a result, the work of assembling the final report in Washington had been greatly delayed. The original overall head of the project (the Superintendent Porter whom Murray had mentioned) had resigned in 1893, and the census was completed by his successor, C. D. Wright—but there was really no way to tell, even then, how reliable the final product was.

Enumerators had received their assignments according to congressional districts, which in New York had been subdivided according to wards. My question to Murray about Beecham and the Thirteenth Ward had, I told Sara, been a guess: I knew that Benjamin

and Sofia Zweig had lived in that ward, and I was going on the theory that Beecham had met them while working in the area, perhaps even while interviewing their family for the census. Fortunately, my guess had paid off, though we were still in the dark as to exactly why Murray had dismissed our man.

"It doesn't seem likely that Beecham was involved in falsifying returns," Sara said, as we hustled up Greenwich Avenue toward Bank Street. "He's not the type to get involved in politics—and besides, the census was already completed. But if not that, then what?"

"We can send the Isaacsons back to find out tomorrow," I answered. "Murray seems like the kind of man who'll respond to a badge. Though if you asked me to post odds right now I'd give you twelve to one that it's got something to do with children. Maybe someone finally came forward with a complaint—not necessarily anything violent, but something seamy, all the same."

"It does seem likely," Sara said. "You remember the remark Murray made when he was discussing how respectable Beecham seemed? And how that made him find whatever it was so 'remarkable'?"

"Exactly," I answered. "There's an unpleasant little tale in there somewhere."

We'd reached Bank Street and turned left. A typical series of Greenwich Village blocks opened up before us, tree- and townhouse-lined until they closed in on the Hudson River, where trucking stations and warehouses took over. The stoops and cornices of the town houses were a picture of quaint monotony, and as we passed by each residence we could see into the relatively low-standing parlors of the comfortable middle-class families who inhabited the neighborhood. Number 23 Bank Street was only a block and a half from Greenwich Avenue, but as we covered that distance Sara's and my hopes had time to rise high nonetheless. When we reached the building, however, disappointment crashed down hard.

In one corner of the parlor window was a small, very tasteful sign: ROOM TO LET. Sara and I exchanged sobered looks, then made our way up the steps of the building to the narrow front door. There was a small brass bell handle on the right side of the frame, and I pulled it. Silently, Sara and I stood and waited for several minutes; then we finally heard shuffling footsteps and an old woman's voice:

"No, no, no. Get away—go on, now."

It was difficult to tell whether or not the order was being directed at us; but when several bolts on the door were noisily thrown, I began to suspect that it was not. The door finally opened, and we were faced by a small, white-haired crone in a faded blue dress of a style dating back to the seventies. She was missing several teeth, and there were wiry white hairs protruding from her jaw at several points. Her eyes were lively, though they did not bespeak a particularly clear mind. She was about to say something to us when a small orange cat appeared at her feet. She kicked the creature lightly back into the house.

"No, I said!" the old woman scolded. "These people have nothing to say to you—any of you!" At that point I became aware of some rather loud mewing coming from inside—by my reckoning, the work of at least half a dozen cats. The woman looked up at me brightly. "Yes? Did you want to inquire about the room?"

The question put me at a momentary loss; fortunately, Sara stepped into the breach by introducing first herself and then me. "The room, ma'am?" Sara continued, following the introductions. "Not precisely—rather, about its former occupant. Mr. Beecham has, I believe, moved?"

"Oh, yes," the woman answered, as another cat appeared at the door. This one, a gray-striped thing, managed to get to the top of the stoop. "Here!" the woman said. "Peter! Oh, do catch him, will you, Mr. Moore?" I bent down, snatched the cat up, and then gave him a little scratch under the chin before returning him to the woman. "Cats!" she said. "You wouldn't think that they'd be so anxious to disappear!"

Sara cleared her throat. "Yes, indeed, Mrs…. Mrs….?"

"Piedmont," the woman answered. "And it's only the eight that I actually let into the house—the other fifteen are required to stay in the yard, or I become very cross with them."

"Of course, Mrs. Piedmont," Sara said. "Only the eight—a perfectly reasonable number." Mrs. Piedmont nodded in satisfaction, and Sara asked, "As for Mr. Beecham…?"

"Mr. Beecham?" the woman answered. "Yes. Very polite. Very prompt. And never drank. Not a favorite of the cats, of course—not much of a man for animals at all, really, but—"

"Did he leave a forwarding address, by any chance?" Sara cut in.

“He couldn’t,” Mrs. Piedmont answered. “He had no idea where he was going. He thought perhaps Mexico, or South America. He said there were opportunities for men of initiative there.” The woman caught herself, and then opened the door a bit wider. “I am sorry,” she said, “you must forgive me. Please do come in.”

With a slight roll of my eyes I followed Sara through the door, knowing that every nugget of hard information we might get out of the charming Mrs. Piedmont was likely to be accompanied by five or ten minutes of useless babbling. My enthusiasm was further dampened when she led us into her very primly furnished but aged and dusty parlor. Everything in the room, from chairs and settees to a large collection of Victorian knickknacks, seemed on the verge of disintegrating quietly into dust. In addition, the unmistakable odor of cat urine and feces permeated the entire house.

“Cats,” Mrs. Piedmont said merrily as she sat down in a high-armed chair. “Wonderful companions, but they will run off. Quite disappear, without so much as a word!”

“Mrs. Piedmont,” Sara said indulgently, “we really are most anxious to find Mr. Beecham. We’re—old friends of his, you see—”

“Oh, but you can’t be,” Mrs. Piedmont said, her face scowling a bit. “Mr. Beecham had no friends. He said so. He always said so. ‘He travels swiftest who travels alone, Mrs. Piedmont,’ he would tell me in the morning, and then it was off to the shipping office.”

“Shipping office?” I said. “But surely—”

Sara touched my hand to silence me, then smiled as several cats wandered into the room from the hallway. “Of course,” she said. “The shipping office. A very enterprising man.”

“Indeed,” Mrs. Piedmont answered. “Oh, and there’s Lysander,” she went on, pointing to one of the cats, who was mewing profusely. “I haven’t seen him since Saturday. Cats! They do disappear…”

“Mrs. Piedmont,” Sara said, still showing remarkable patience, “how long did Mr. Beecham live with you?”

“How long?” The old girl began to chew at a finger as she cogitated. “Why, nearly three years, all in all. Never a complaint, always on time with his rent.” She frowned. “But a somber sort of a man, really. And he never ate! Never ate that I saw, that is. Always working, day and night—though I suppose he must’ve eaten *sometime,* mustn’t he?”

Sara smiled again and nodded. “And do you know why he left?”

“Well,” Mrs. Piedmont said simply. “The *failure*.”

“Failure?” I said, hoping for a clue.

“His shipping line,” came the reply. “The great tempest off the China coast. Oh, those poor seamen. Mr. Beecham gave all the money he had left to their families, you know.” A bony hand went up confidentially. “If you see a small calico lady come through, Miss Howard, do tell me. She didn’t come down for breakfast, and they *will* disappear.”

Mean as it may sound, I was about ready to wring Mrs. Piedmont’s neck, along with those of her blasted cats; but Sara stayed the course, inquiring congenially, “Did you ask Mr. Beecham to leave, then?”

“I should say not,” Mrs. Piedmont answered. “He went of his own accord. He told me he had no money to pay his rent, and he didn’t intend to stay where he couldn’t pay his way. I offered to give him a few weeks’ grace, but he wouldn’t have it. I remember that day very well—a week before Christmas. It was about the time that little Jib disappeared.”

I groaned quietly as Sara asked, “Jib? A cat?”

“Yes,” Mrs. Piedmont answered dreamily. “Just—disappeared. Never a word. They have their own affairs to attend to, cats.”

As my eyes wandered to the floor, I noticed that several more of Mrs. Piedmont’s charges had noiselessly entered the room, and that one of them was attending to its own affairs in a shadowy corner. I nudged Sara, indicating the upstairs impatiently.

“Do you think we might have a look at the room?” Sara asked.

Mrs. Piedmont came back from her daydream with a smile, and looked at us as though we’d only just entered. “Then it’s the room you’re interested in?”

“We may be.”

That set off a new round of chatter as we headed out of the parlor and up the staircase, the ancient green wallpaper of which was peeling and torn. The room that Beecham had rented was on the third floor, which, climbing at Mrs. Piedmont’s pace, seemed to take an

eternity to reach. By the time we finally did, all eight of the house cats had already collected around the door, and were mewing away. Mrs. Piedmont unlocked the room and then we entered.

The first thing that struck me was that the cats didn't follow us in. As soon as the door opened their mewing stopped, and then they sat at the threshold, looking momentarily concerned before they shot off down the stairs. With their departure I turned to survey the chamber, and quickly caught a trace of something in the air: the smell of decay. It was nothing like the stench of feline waste, nor did it match the familiar aromas of old age and antiques that marked the parlor. This was more pungent. A dead mouse, or some such, I finally decided, and when Sara wrinkled her nose sourly I knew that she'd caught it, too. Thinking nothing more of it for the moment, I finally fixed my attention on the room.

I needn't have bothered. It was a spare, empty chamber, with a window that looked out over Bank Street. There were no furnishings other than an old four-poster bed, an equally aged wardrobe, and a plain set of drawers. A washbasin sat on a large doily atop the drawers, along with a matching pitcher; other than that, the room was absolutely empty.

"Just as he found it, is how he left it," Mrs. Piedmont said. "He was that way, Mr. Beecham."

Under the guise of deciding whether or not we wanted to rent the room, Sara and I went through the wardrobe and the chest of drawers, without finding any trace of human activity. There was simply nothing in the ten-by-twenty-foot confines of that chamber that would have made you believe that it had ever been inhabited by anyone, much less by a tortured soul whom we suspected of having done away with at least half a dozen children in a bizarre and brutal fashion. The lingering scent of decay in the air only reinforced this conclusion. Eventually Sara and I told Mrs. Piedmont that, though it was indeed a lovely little room, it was nonetheless too small for our purposes. Then we turned to go back downstairs.

Sara and our hostess, who once again began blathering about her cats, had already reached the staircase when I caught sight of something just inside the door of Beecham's room: a few small stains on the bland, striped wallpaper. They were of a brownish hue, and in a pattern that indicated that whatever the substance was—and it could easily have been blood—it had hit the wall in a hard splatter. Following the path of the stain, I arrived at the bed; and, seeing as

Mrs. Piedmont was now out of sight, I pulled the mattress up to have a look.

A stench hit me, suddenly and hard. It was identical to that which I'd detected on entering the room, only of an increased strength that immediately made me close my eyes, cover my mouth, and want to retch. I was about to drop the mattress again when my eyes opened long enough to catch sight of a small skeleton. A furry hide was stretched over the bones, though in some spots the hide had rotted away, revealing the dried remains of inner organs. Old, rotting string was wound around the four legs of the skeleton at the feet, and next to the rear legs lay several sections of jointed bone, almost like tiny vertebrae—a tail, I realized, that'd been cut into pieces. The creature's skull, barely covered by a few small patches of skin and fur, lay some eight inches from the rest of the skeleton. Both the mattress and the spring beneath it bore broad stains of a color that matched the splotches on the wall.

I finally let go of the mattress, then jumped out into the hall and took out a handkerchief, dabbing at my face. Resisting one more urge to vomit, I took a few deep breaths and stood at the top of the stairs, trying to determine if I felt sound enough to navigate them.

"John?" I heard Sara call from downstairs. "Are you coming?"

The first flight of stairs was a bit tricky, but by the second I was doing much better; and when I reached the front door of the house, where Mrs. Piedmont was standing in the midst of her mewing cats, holding Sara's hand, I even managed to arrange a smile. I thanked Mrs. Piedmont quickly and then stepped out into the cloudless night, the air of which seemed especially clean given what I'd been breathing inside.

Sara followed me, still talking to Mrs. Piedmont, and then the same gray-striped cat bounded out onto the stoop. "Peter!" Mrs. Piedmont cried. "Miss Howard, could you…?" Sara already had the animal in her arms, and she handed it to Mrs. Piedmont with a smile. "Cats!" Mrs. Piedmont said one more time, and then she called more goodbyes and closed the door.

Sara came down the steps and joined me, her smile shrinking as she studied my face. "John?" she said. "You've gone pale, what is it?" She stood still and then grabbed my arm. "You found something up there —what was it?"

“Jib,” I answered, wiping my face again with my handkerchief.

Sara’s face screwed up. “Jib? The *cat*? What in the world are you talking about?”

“Let me put it this way,” I said, taking her arm and starting the walk back toward Broadway. “Regardless of what Mrs. Piedmont may say, cats do *not* just disappear.”

CHAPTER 40

Sara and I got back to Number 808 Broadway just a few minutes ahead of the Isaacsons, whose mood on entering was little better than ours had been several hours earlier. In a flurry we told the detective sergeants of our adventures that evening, as Sara wrote the details of the encounters up on the chalkboard. Both Lucius and Marcus were profoundly encouraged at our having been able to trace at least some of John Beecham's movements, even though the trips to the Census Bureau and Mrs. Piedmont's house had—to my way of thinking, at any rate—left us in effectively the same position we'd been in that morning: with no idea where Beecham was now living or what he was now doing.

"True, John," Lucius said, "but we do know much more about what he's *not* doing. Our idea that he might've been inclined to make use of the knowledge he got from having a minister for a father appears to have been wrong—and there's probably a reason for that."

"Maybe the bitterness is just too powerful," Marcus said, considering the question. "Maybe he can't so much as pay lip service to what his father stood for, even for the purposes of finding a job."

"Because of the hypocrisy within his family?" Sara asked, still scratching away at the board.

"That's right," Marcus answered. "The whole notion of church and missionary work may just make him instinctively too violent—he can't pursue it, because he wouldn't be able to trust himself to keep up appearances."

"Good," Lucius said, bobbing his head. "So he takes the job at the Census Bureau, which doesn't seem to put him in any danger of

revealing himself, accidentally or otherwise. After all, a lot of the men who got jobs as enumerators lied on their applications, without anyone discovering it."

"The job also satisfies a big craving for him," I added. "It gets him into people's houses, and close to their children, whom he can learn about without seeming to be interested—which eventually poses a problem for him."

Marcus took over: "Because after a while he starts having urges that he can't control. But what about the boys? He didn't meet them at their homes—they didn't live with their families, and he'd already been fired, anyway."

"True," I said. "That's an open question. But wherever he went after the Census Bureau, he'd want to have continued access to people's private affairs—and hopefully go on visiting families in their homes—in order to do research on his victims. That way, even though the boys are living in the disorderly houses, he'd be able to sympathize and commiserate with their specific situations—which would be a very effective way of getting them to trust him."

"And which is also the element that's been missing from the charity workers we've interviewed," Sara said, standing away from the chalkboard.

"Exactly," I said, opening windows to let the evening air into our slightly stuffy headquarters.

"I'm still not sure, though," Marcus said, "how this helps us figure out where he is *now*. I don't want to sound anxious, friends, but we're *six days* away from the next attack."

That prompted a few minutes of silence, during which all our eyes wandered toward the pile of photographs that sat on Marcus's desk. That pile would grow, each of us knew, if we failed now. Eventually, Lucius spoke up in a grimly determined voice:

"We've got to stay with what got us here—follow his confident, aggressive side. He didn't show fear or panic, in his dealings with the Census Bureau and Mrs. Piedmont. He made up elaborate lies and lived within them for extended periods of time without losing control. Whether he'd been killing steadily throughout that time, or whether getting fired from his job brought on a new wave of violence, we don't know. But I'll bet he hasn't run out of confidence yet, even if part of him does want to get caught. Let's assume that, anyway. Let's assume

he's been able to find another job that gives him what he wants—use of the rooftops, and a way to move among the tenement population without having to try to help or appeal to them. Any ideas?"

It was hard to watch a streak of creative thinking and good luck die, but die ours did at just that moment. Perhaps we all needed to distance ourselves from the problem for a few hours, or perhaps we'd been overly intimidated by the reminder that we were less than a week away from our literal deadline; whatever the case, our minds and mouths ground to a collective halt. True, we still had one more card to play at the Census Bureau: Marcus and Lucius would visit Charles Murray the following morning, and try to get a better idea of what had prompted Beecham's dismissal in December. Other than that, however, our next steps were difficult to discern; and it was in a mood of extreme uncertainty that we finally let the long day end at about ten o'clock.

During their interview with Murray on Tuesday, the Isaacsons did indeed discover (as they told Sara and me when they returned to Number 808 in the evening) that Beecham had been fired for paying excessive and disturbing attention to a child: a young girl named Ellie Leshka, who lived in a tenement on Orchard Street just above Canal. The address was within the Thirteenth Ward, and not far from where the Zweig children had lived; none of which changed the fact that stalking a young girl who wasn't a prostitute (if such was indeed what Beecham had been doing with Ellie Leshka) was an activity he hadn't engaged in since killing Sofia Zweig, to the best of our knowledge. Marcus and Lucius had hoped to shed further light on this subject by way of a visit to young Ellie and her parents, but as luck would have it the family had recently left New York—for, of all places, Chicago.

According to Murray, the Leshkas had never mentioned anything about violence when they made their complaint about Beecham. Apparently he'd never menaced Ellie—in fact, he'd been kind to her. But the girl had recently turned twelve, and her father and mother had developed perfectly understandable concerns about their daughter spending a lot of time with an unknown, solitary man at such an age. Charles Murray told the Isaacsons that he wouldn't necessarily have fired Beecham, except that the latter had gained access to the Leshkas' home by saying he was on official Census Bureau business, when the family had not, in fact, been scheduled for an interview. Murray's experiences had been such that he was determined to avoid anything that even smelled like scandal.

Sara noted that, in addition to Ellie Leshka's being a girl of good

reputation, there was another unusual aspect to her case: she'd survived her association with Beecham. Given these circumstances, Sara thought it possible that Beecham never intended to kill her. Perhaps this was an example of a genuine attempt on his part to form an attachment to another human being; if so, it was the first in his adult life that we'd heard anything about, save for his shadowy behavior in the Chicago orphanages. Perhaps, too, the Leshkas' insistence that he not approach their daughter, coupled with the family's departure from the city, had contributed to Beecham's rage; again, we had to remember that the recent boy-whore killings had begun soon after the events of December.

Such, however, was about all the information and speculation we could wring out of the Census Bureau connection. We completed that process at close to five-thirty on Tuesday, and then Sara and I presented the Isaacsons with the results of our own day's work: a short list of occupations that we thought Beecham might have moved on to after his dismissal. Taking all the factors that we considered reliable into account—Beecham's resentment of immigrants, his apparent inability to get close to people (or at least to adults), his need to be on the rooftops, and his hostility toward religious organizations of any kind—Sara and I had narrowed down our initial collection of possibilities to two basic areas of employment: bill collecting and process serving. Both were secular pursuits that not only would have kept Beecham on the rooftops (front doors often being barred to such unwanted characters), but would also have provided him with a certain sense of power—and control. At the same time, such jobs would have given him continued access to personal information concerning a broad range of people, as well as a rationale for approaching them in their homes. Finally, Sara had remembered something late in the afternoon that we felt further confirmed our speculation: when Beecham had been admitted to St. Elizabeth's Hospital, he had spoken of society's need for laws, and for men to enforce them. Debtors and those involved in illegal activities (even if only tangentially) would certainly have aroused his scorn, and the prospect of harassing them would probably have been attractive.

Marcus and Lucius agreed with our reasoning, even though they knew, as Sara and I did, that it meant a new round of footwork. However, we had reason to be hopeful: the list of government bureaus and collection agencies that employed agents of the type we'd described was far more manageable than the long roster of charity organizations that we'd already tackled. Knowing that police secretaries such as Sara and reporters such as me would never get any information out of the city marshal's office or any other government

entity, the Isaacsons took on the task of assaulting those bureaucracies. Sara and I, meanwhile, split a list of independent collection agencies, again focusing on those that operated in the Lower East Side and Greenwich Village generally, and in the Thirteenth Ward in particular. By early Wednesday morning we were all on the streets again.

If canvassing the city's charities had been a morally infuriating task, going up against the heads of collection agencies proved a physically intimidating one. Generally run out of small, dirty, upper-story offices, those agencies were most often headed by men who'd had unhappy experiences in some vaguely related field—police and legal work, confidence games, even, in one case, bounty hunting. They were not a breed that relinquished information easily, and only the promise of reward would even start their jaws moving. Too often, of course, such "rewards" were demanded in advance, and were repaid by information that was either blatantly false or of a usefulness to our work that only the author himself could possibly have divined.

Once again, tedious drudgery ate up hours (and by Thursday morning looked as though it would consume whole days) without producing results. The city did indeed keep careful records of those men it employed as process servers, the Isaacsons learned, but no John Beecham appeared in any of the files that they examined in the first twenty-four hours. Sara's initial day and a half of work in the collection agencies resulted in nothing but vulgar propositions; and as for myself, Thursday afternoon found me back at our headquarters, finished with the list of agencies I'd been assigned to cover and at a loss as to what I should do next. Alone and staring out the windows of Number 808 toward the Hudson River, I was again consumed by that familiar sense of dread which said that we weren't going to be ready. Sunday night would come, and Beecham, now aware that we would probably be watching those disorderly houses that dealt in boy-whores, would pick a victim from a new locale, make off with him to some unknown place, and again perform his loathsome ritual. All we needed, I kept thinking over and over, was an address, an occupation, anything that would let *us* get the drop on *him,* so that at the crucial moment we could step in to end his barbarity and his misery, the relentless torment that was driving him on. It was odd, after all I'd seen and been through, to think of *his* torment; odder still to realize that I had some sort of vague sympathy for the man. Yet the sentiment was in me, and it was understanding the context of his life that had put it there: of the many goals that Kreizler had outlined at the beginning of the investigation, we had at least achieved that one…

I was jolted back to the business at hand by the sound of the telephone. Picking it up, I heard Sara's voice.

"John? What are you doing?"

"Nothing. I've finished my list and gotten nowhere."

"Then come up to Number 967 Broadway. Second floor. Quickly."

"Nine-sixty-seven—that's above Twentieth Street."

"Very good. Between Twenty-second and Twenty-third actually."

"But that's outside your assigned area."

"Yes. I sometimes don't say my prayers at night, either." She sighed once. "We've been stupid about this—it should've been obvious. Now *get moving*!"

Before I could reply she had rung off. I found my jacket and threw it on, then wrote a note for the Isaacsons, in case they returned before we did. I was just about to go out the door when the telephone rang again. I snatched it up, and heard Joseph's voice:

"Mr. Moore? Is that you?"

"Joseph?" I said. "What's going on?"

"Oh, well, nothing, except that—" His tone was rather perplexed. "Are you sure about the things you told me? About the man you're looking for, I mean."

"As sure as I can be about anything in this business. Why?"

"Well, it's just that I saw a friend of mine last night—he's a street cruiser, doesn't work any house—and he said something that reminded me of what you said."

Rushed as I was, I took the time to sit down and grab a pencil and paper. "Go on, Joseph."

"He said a man had promised to—well, what you said, take him away, and all that. Said he was going to live in a big—I don't know—castle or something, where he'd be able to see the whole city, and laugh at everybody who ever did him a wrong turn. So it reminded me of what you said, and I asked him if the man had anything wrong with his face. But he said no. You sure about that thing with the face?"

“Yes,” I answered. “At this point I’m—”

“Uh-oh,” Joseph interrupted. “Scotch Ann’s yelling, it looks like I’ve got a customer. Gotta go.”

“Wait, Joseph. Just tell me—”

“Sorry—can’t talk. Could we meet? Later tonight, maybe?”

I wanted to press him for more information, but knowing his situation I let it go. “All right. The same place. Ten o’clock?”

“Okay.” He sounded happy. “See you then.”

I replaced the earpiece of the ’phone and shot out of our headquarters.

Grabbing onto the back of a Broadway streetcar after leaving Number 808, I made the trip to Twenty-second Street in a matter of minutes. After jumping back down to the cobblestone pavement that bordered the tracks along that stretch of the avenue, I looked across the way at a triangular group of buildings that were covered with enormous signs advertising everything from painless dentistry to eyeglasses to steamship tickets. Tucked in among these notices, painted on the windows of the second story of Number 967, were a tasteful (and therefore distinct) group of golden letters: MITCHELL HARPER, ACCOUNTS SETTLED. After waiting for a break in the traffic, I crossed over and headed into the building.

I found Sara locked in private conversation with Mr. Harper in his small office. Neither the man nor the room matched the pleasant gold-leaf lettering on the windows. If Mr. Harper employed a cleaning service, you couldn’t tell it from the soot that coated the few pieces of furniture in his office, while the roughness of his clothing and large cigar were exceeded only by that of his unshaven face and jaggedly cut hair. Sara introduced us, but Harper didn’t offer his hand.

“I’ve read a great deal about medicine, Mr. Moore,” he explained in a coarse voice, locking his thumbs into his stained vest. “Microbes, sir! Microbes are responsible for disease, and they pass through the touch!”

For an instant I thought of telling the man that bathing might give those microbes something to worry about; but then I just nodded and turned to Sara, my face asking why in the world she’d forced me to come to this place.

"We should have thought of it right away," she whispered, before saying out loud: "Mr. Harper was engaged by Mr. Lanford Stern of Washington Street in February, to attend to some outstanding debts." Recognizing that this didn't jog my memory one bit, Sara added confidentially, "Mr. Stern, you will recall, owns a number of buildings in the Washington Market area. One of his tenants is a Mr. Ghazi."

"Oh," I said simply. "Oh, of course. Why didn't you just say that—"

Sara stopped me with a touch, obviously not wanting Mr. Harper to learn the real nature of our business. "I saw Mr. Stern this morning," she said pointedly, and finally I realized why we should have thought of going back to Mr. Stern at the beginning of this phase of our search: the elder Ghazi had been months behind in his rent at the time of his son's death. "I told him," Sara continued, "about the man we're anxious to find—the man who we believed worked as a collector, and whose brother has died, leaving him a great deal of money?"

I nodded and smiled, recognizing that Sara was developing her own talent for impromptu falsehoods. "Oh, yes," I said quickly.

"Mr. Stern said that he referred all his back rent accounts to Mr. Harper," Sara continued. "And—"

"And as I told Miss Howard, here," Harper cut in, "if there's estate money to be had, I want to know what my cut'll be before I reveal anything."

I nodded and faced the man fully—this was going to be child's play. "Mr. Harper," I said, with a broad flourish, "I feel confident in saying that if you can provide us with the whereabouts of Mr. Beecham, you can expect a very generous percentage. A finder's fee, as it were. Say, five percent?"

Harper's saliva-soaked cigar almost fell out of his mouth. "Five per —why, that *is* generous, sir. Generous, indeed! Five percent!"

"Five percent of all there is," I repeated. "You have my word. But tell me—*do* you know Mr. Beecham's whereabouts?"

The man looked momentarily unsure of himself. "Well—that is, I know them *approximately,* Mr. Moore. I know of where he's *likely* to be, anyway—at least when he gets thirsty." I gave the man a hard stare. "I can take you there, myself, honest to God! It's a little stale-beer dive down in the Mulberry Bend, that's where I first met him. I would tell you to wait for him here, but—the fact is that about two

weeks ago I had to let him go."

"Let him go?" I queried. "Why?"

"I'm a respectable man," Harper answered. "And this is a respectable business. But—well, sir, the fact is you occasionally have to use a little muscle. Do some convincing. Who's going to pay their bills without a little convincing? I originally hired Beecham because he was a big man, and strong. Said he could handle himself in a fight. So what does he do? Talks to them. Chats it up, that's what he does. Well, shit, sir—oh. My apologies, Miss. But you're not going to get any money out of anybody by talking to them. Especially not the immigrants. Hell, you give them the chance, they'll talk you into the grave! That Ghazi character was a good example—I sent Beecham to his place three times and he never got one nickel out of the man."

Harper had more he wanted to tell us, but we didn't need to hear it. After asking him to write down the address of the stale-beer dive he'd mentioned, Sara and I told him that we were going to check his lead out that very night, and that if it led to Beecham he could expect his money very soon. Ironically, this avaricious little man had given us the first piece of free information we'd had in two days—and the only one that was destined to amount to anything.

CHAPTER 41

As we came out of Harper's building we ran headlong into the Isaacsons, who had found my note. Immediately repairing to Brübacher's Wine Garden, the four of us went over what the account settler had said. Then we devised a plan for the evening. Our options were fairly straightforward: if we should locate Beecham we wouldn't confront him, but rather telephone Theodore and have him send down several detectives—men whose faces would be unknown to Beecham—whom we'd set to work shadowing the man. Alternately, if we were able to find out where Beecham lived, but if for some reason he wasn't in, we'd quickly search his place for evidence that might permit an immediate arrest. That much settled, we all drained our glasses and, at about eight-thirty, boarded a streetcar and began our expedition into Five Points.

The effect of that storied neighborhood has always been difficult to describe to the uninitiated. Even on a pleasant spring night like the one we moved through that Thursday, the place exuded a deep sense of mortal threat; yet that threat was not always or even usually exhibited in loud or aggressive ways, such as was the case in some other shady parts of the city. In the Tenderloin, for example, a general air of defiant carousing reigned, making encounters with drunken toughs out to demonstrate their prowess a routine matter. Yet such were little more than noisy displays, generally, and a murder in the Tenderloin was still a noteworthy event. Five Points was an entirely different breed of neighborhood. Oh, there were shouts and screams to be heard, all right; but they tended to drift out of buildings, or, if they did originate outside, to be quickly stifled. Indeed, I think the most disconcerting thing about the area around Mulberry Bend (the few blocks of the Bend itself were at that time being demolished, thanks to Jake Riis's tireless campaigning) was the surprisingly low level of

outward activity. The residents of the neighborhood spent most of their time crammed into the miserable shanties and tenements that lined the streets, or, more often, packed into the dives that occupied the ground and first floors of a remarkably large number of those squalid buildings. Death and despair did their work without fanfare in the Bend, and they did a lot of it: just walking down those lonely, decrepit streets was enough to make the sunniest of souls wonder about the ultimate value of human life.

I could see that Lucius was doing just that as we reached the address Harper had given us, Number 119 Baxter Street. A few dirt- and urine-covered stone stairs next to the building's entrance led down to a doorway that, to judge by the laughs and groans floating out of it, was the entrance to the dive we'd been told Beecham frequented. I turned to Lucius, and found him anxiously scanning the dark streets around us.

"Lucius—you and Sara stay here," I said. "We'll need you to keep watch."

He nodded once, producing a handkerchief and wiping his forehead. "Good," he said. "Fine, I mean."

"And if there's any trouble do *not* show your badge," I added. "It's just an invitation to murder, down here." As Marcus and I made for the steps, I eyed Lucius once more and then murmured into Sara's ear, "Look after him, will you?" She smiled once at that, and though I could tell that she, too, was apprehensive, I knew that her aim would remain steady through whatever followed. Marcus and I went inside.

I don't know precisely what the caves looked like that prehistoric men are said to have inhabited, but the average Five Points dive cannot have represented any great advancement—and the one we entered that night was nothing if not average. The ceiling was only eight feet or so from the dirt floor, since the space had originally been designed as a cellar for the storefront above. There were no windows: light was provided by four filthy kerosene lamps that hung above a like number of long, low tables arranged in two rows. At these tables sat and slept the customers, their differences of age, sex, and dress more than outweighed by their common air of drunken dementia. There were about twenty people in the place that night, though only three—a pair of men and a woman, the last groaning and cackling at the incomprehensible statements of the other two—showed any real signs of life. They examined us with looks of glassy hatred when we came in, and Marcus inclined his head toward me.

“I suppose,” he whispered, “that the key in here is to move slowly.”

I nodded, and then we wandered back to the “bar”—a plank resting on two ash barrels at the far end of the room. Immediately, two glasses of the substance from which such places took their name were placed in front of us. Stale beer was a flat, repellant mixture of the dregs that were collected from dozens of kegs in slightly more reputable houses—I paid for the drinks but made no move to touch mine, and Marcus pushed his glass aside.

The bartender who stood before us was about five and a half feet tall, with tawny hair, a matching mustache, and a typical look of slightly crazed resentment on his face.

“Don’ wan’ the drinks?” he asked.

I shook my head. “Information. About a customer.”

“Fuck,” the man snorted. “Ge’ out.”

I produced more money. “Just one or two questions.”

The man looked around anxiously and, seeing that the trio of relatively *compos mentis* customers were no longer watching us, slipped the money into his pocket. “Well?”

I shot the name Beecham over the bartender’s bow, producing no reaction; but when I went on to describe a tall man with a facial twitch, I could see by the heightened glimmer in the fellow’s sickly bright eyes that our friend Mitchell Harper had played straight with us.

“A block up,” the bartender mumbled. “Number 155. Top floor, inna back.”

Marcus looked at me dubiously, and the bartender caught it. “Seen it myself!” he insisted. “You frumma girl’s fam’ly?”

“Girl?” I said.

The bartender nodded. “Too’ a girl up there. Mother thought she’d been ’napped. Didn’ hurt her, though—but did near kill a man that mentioned it in here.”

I weighed that. “He drinks a lot?”

“Didn’ used to. Never unnerstood what he was doin’ here when he

first showed up. Lately more, though."

I looked to Marcus, who gave me a quick nod. After dumping some more money on the bar we turned to go, but the bartender grabbed my arm. "You heard nuthin' from me," he said urgently. "Tha's no man to cross." He bared several yellow and gray teeth. "Iss quite a pick he carries."

Marcus and I started away again, leaving the bartender to drain the two glasses of stale beer he'd poured for us. Once more we exercised great care in walking by the near-dead bodies at the tables, and though one man by the door did turn and begin to urinate unconsciously on the floor as we passed, there didn't seem anything personal in the act.

As Marcus stepped over the puddle of urine he murmured to me, "So Beecham's drinking."

"Yes," I answered, opening the front door. "I remember Kreizler saying once that our man might be entering a final, self-destructive phase. Anybody who drinks in a joint like this has certainly done that."

We got back outside to find Sara and Lucius looking just as anxious as we'd left them. "Come on," I said quickly, leading the way north. "We've got an address."

Number 155 Baxter Street was an unremarkable New York tenement, though in any other neighborhood the women and children who were hanging out its windows on that seasonable night would have been laughing or singing or at least screaming at one another. Here they simply sat with their heads in their hands, the youngest of them looking as worldly and tired as the oldest, and none of them exhibiting any interest in what occurred on the street. A man who I placed at about thirty was seated on the stoop, swinging a nightstick that looked to be authentic police issue. It wasn't difficult to judge, after getting a glimpse of the man's blow-twisted features and surly grin, just how he'd laid hands on the trophy. I mounted the stoop, and the end of the nightstick poked my chest just hard enough to stop me from going further.

"Business?" the crooked-faced man said, his breath reeking of camphor-laced liquor.

"We're here to see a resident," I answered.

The man laughed. “Don’t git gay wit me, swell. Business?”

I paused before answering. “Who are you supposed to be?”

The laugh died. “I’m *supposed* to be da mug what watches dis building—for da landlord. So don’t git gay wit me, boy, less youse wanna taste dis sap.” He was speaking in the Bowery slang long since immortalized by the city’s toughs, a language that was always a little difficult to take seriously; still, I didn’t like the look of the nightstick, and went for my billfold once again.

“Top floor,” I said, holding some money out. “In the back. Anybody home?”

The man’s grin returned. “Oh!” he said, taking the cash. “Youse mean old—” He suddenly began to blink, and then to comically contort his right jaw, cheek, and eye. Apparently unsatisfied with the results of this performance, he heightened its effect by tugging at his head with his hands. Pleased with this additional effort, he began to laugh loud. “Nah, he ain’t dere,” he finally said. “Never dere, not nights. During da day, sometimes, but not nights. You can check da roof, mebbe he’s up dere. Likes it up dere, does dat boid.”

“What about his flat?” I said. “Maybe we’d like to wait for him there.”

“Mebbe it’s locked,” the fellow answered with another grin. I held out still more money. “Den agin, mebbe it ain’t.” The man started into the building. “Ain’t cops, is youse?”

“I’m not paying you to ask questions,” I answered.

The man gave my words something that approached consideration, then nodded. “Okay. Come on wit me—but keep it quiet, right?”

We all nodded and followed the man inside. The building’s long, darkened staircase was redolent with the usual stenches of rotting refuse and human waste, and at its foot I paused to let Sara get in front of me.

“A world away from Mrs. Piedmont’s,” she whispered as she passed.

We got up the six flights of stairs without incident, and then our guide knocked on one of four doors that branched off a small landing. After getting no reply, he held up a finger. “Wait here a minute,” he said, and then he loped up the final flight of stairs to the roof. In

seconds he was back, looking more relaxed. “All clear,” he announced, taking a large ring of keys from his hip pocket and unlocking the door he’d knocked on. “Hadda make sure he weren’t around. He’s a touchy one, old—” Instead of saying a name, the man began to contort his face again, which gave him another laugh. Finally, we entered the flat.

A kerosene lamp sat on a shelf by the door, and I lit it. The space that slowly became visible was essentially one narrow hallway, perhaps thirty feet in overall length, in the middle of which had been built a small partition and a doorway with a transom over it. Two recently cut chinks in the side walls were the flat’s only connections to the outside world, offering limited, bleak views across narrow airshafts into similar gaps in the walls of neighboring flats. A small stove was set up against the partition, though there were apparently no sanitary facilities, other than a rusted bucket. Only a few pieces of furniture could be seen from the front door: a plain old desk and chair on the near side of the partition, and beyond it the foot of a bed. Coats of thick, cheap paint had chipped and peeled away from the walls, revealing one another and creating the overall impression of a brown stain such as one might find at the bottom of a commode.

In this place lived the being who had once been Japheth Dury and was now the murderer John Beecham; and within this spare little hole there had to be clues, difficult as they might be to see. Without speaking, I indicated the far end of the flat to the Isaacsons; they each nodded, then proceeded past the partition and into that area. Sara and I took a few tentative steps toward the old desk, while our guide remained alertly at the front door.

Our entire search could not have taken more than five minutes, so small and sparsely furnished was the place. The old desk had three drawers that Sara began to check in the near-darkness, putting her hands in each to make sure she missed nothing. Above the desk, tacked to the crumbling wall, was some sort of a map. Leaning over to study it, I noticed a peculiar feeling under my hands: picking them up, I discovered that the top of the desk had been deeply carved into a monotonous series of unembellished grooves. Putting my hands back down I looked at the map again: I was able to recognize the outline of Manhattan, but the marks that had been drawn over that outline were strange to me: a series of straight, intersecting lines with arcane numbers and symbols scribbled in at various points. I was about to put my head closer when I heard Sara say:

“Here. John.”

Looking down I saw her remove a small wooden box from the bottom drawer. She placed it on the grooved desktop rather fearfully, then stood away.

Affixed to the lid of the box was an old daguerreotype, very similar in style and composition to the Civil War work of the eminent photographer Mathew Brady. Based on the picture's aged and battered condition I judged it to be of about the same vintage as Brady's work. The image displayed was that of a dead white man: scalped, eviscerated, and emasculated, with arrows protruding from his arms and legs. His eyes were missing. There were no identifying marks on the picture, but it was obviously one of the Reverend Victor Dury's creations.

The box on which the daguerreotype was mounted was closed tightly, but there seemed to be an aroma emanating from it—the same sort of aroma that'd been present in Beecham's room at Mrs. Piedmont's: rotting animal flesh. My heart sank as I laid hold of the thing, although before I could open it I heard Marcus's voice:

"Oh, no. God, *how*…"

Then there were bustling sounds, and Marcus stumbled out to where Sara and I were standing. Even in the lamplight I could see that he was pale—a surprising condition, given that I'd watched the man calmly photograph scenes that would've turned most people's stomachs. In a few seconds Lucius followed him in, bearing something in his arms.

"John!" Lucius called in quiet urgency. "John, it—it's evidence! Good lord, I think we've got a straight murder investigation now!"

"Aw, shit," said our man at the door. "Then youse *is* cops?"

Without answering I struck a match and held it high as I approached Lucius. Just as I focused in on the object in his arms, Sara let out a short cry and then clamped a hand over her mouth, spinning away.

Lucius was holding an enormous glass jar. Inside it, preserved in a substance that I could only suppose to be formaldehyde, were human eyes. Some still trailed their ganglia of optic nerves, and some were smoothly round; some were fresh, others milky and obviously aged; some were blue in color, some were brown, and others were hazel, gray, and green. But it was not the discovery or condition of the eyes, I now understood, that had stunned Marcus—it was their number. For

these were not the ten eyes of our five murdered boys, nor even the fourteen eyes of the boys plus the Zweig children; these were the dozens—the *dozens*—of eyes of more than a score of victims. And all of them were gaping through the curved glass in what seemed silent accusation, pathetically begging to know what had taken us so very long…

In a moment my own eyes wandered back to the small box that Sara had found, which I now opened slowly. The stench of decay that wafted up was not so strong as I expected, allowing me to study the receptacle's strange contents without difficulty. But I could make no sense of what I saw: A small, red-black piece of what looked like desiccated rubber.

"Lucius?" I said softly, holding it out toward him.

Setting the large jar down on the desk, Lucius took the box over by the front door and held it under the kerosene lamp. Our guide looked over his shoulder as the detective sergeant studied the contents.

"Shit?" the man with the nightstick said. "Sure enough *smells* like shit."

"No," Lucius answered evenly, eyes ever on the box. "It is, I believe, the preserved remnants of a human heart."

That was enough to give even a Five Points thug pause, and our guide turned away and into the hall with a look of utter consternation on his face. "Who da hell *are* you people?" he breathed.

I kept my eyes on Lucius. "A heart? Is it the Lohmann boy's?"

He shook his head. "Too old. This has been in here for a very long time. It looks as though it may even have been coated with something, a varnish of some kind."

I turned to Sara, who was taking deep breaths and standing with her arms wrapped around her midsection. Touching her shoulder I said, "All right?"

She nodded once quickly. "Yes. Fine."

My eyes went to Marcus. "You?"

"I think so. Will be, at any rate."

“Lucius—” I waved the shorter Isaacson over. “Someone’s got to check that stove. Can you manage it?”

Lucius bobbed his head certainly: though he’d been apprehensive on the street, he was all business in this situation. “Let me borrow a match.” I gave him the little box from my pocket.

The rest of us listened as he went to the grimy black chunk of iron that stood against the partition. A few pieces of firewood were in a bin next to the thing, and a greasy roasting pan sat on top of it. Someone had apparently been cooking. Lucius struck a match, took a preparatory but calm breath, then pulled the door of the oven cavity open. I closed my eyes as he held the match inside; in another fifteen seconds, I heard the thing bang closed again.

“Nothing,” Lucius announced. “Grease, a charred potato—nothing else.”

I let out a lot of air and tapped Marcus’s shoulder. “What do you make out of this?” I said, pointing to the map of Manhattan on the wall.

Marcus studied it carefully. “Manhattan,” he said quickly. Then, after a few more seconds: “Looks like a surveyor’s map of some kind.” He poked at the spots where the map had been tacked to the wall, then pulled the tacks out. “Plaster hasn’t discolored. It was put up fairly recently, I’d say.”

Lucius rejoined us, and then we all stood in a tight circle away from the box and the jar that sat on the desk.

“That’s all that was in the back?” I asked the Isaacsons.

“That’s all,” Marcus said. “No clothes, nothing. If you ask me, he’s gone.”

“Gone?” Sara echoed.

Marcus nodded in disappointment. “Could be he knew we were closing in. But it certainly doesn’t look like he’s coming back.”

“But why would he leave,” Sara asked, “without taking all that—*evidence*?”

Marcus shook his head. “Maybe he doesn’t think it *is* evidence. Or maybe he was in a hurry. Or maybe…”

"Or maybe," I said, voicing what we all were thinking, "he wanted us to find it."

As we stood absorbing that idea, I noticed our guide straining to get a look at the jar on the desk, and moved to block his view with my body. Then Lucius spoke up: "That may be true, but we've still got to watch this place, in case he does come back. We should tell the commissioner to send other men down—because, like I say, we can treat this as a straight murder investigation now."

"Do you think there's enough evidence to make a charge stick?" Sara asked softly. "I know this sounds awful, but those aren't necessarily the eyes of our victims."

"No," Lucius answered. "But unless he's got one hell of an explanation for whose they *are,* I think any jury in the city will convict —especially if we fill in the background with what we know."

"All right, then," I said. "Sara and I will get up to Mulberry Street and tell Roosevelt to assign men to watch this building day and night. Lucius, you and Marcus will have to stay here until that relief comes. What have you got for weapons?" Marcus just shook his head, but Lucius produced the same service revolver that I'd seen him with at Castle Garden, after the ibn-Ghazi murder. "Fine," I said. "While you're waiting, Marcus, see what kind of sense you can make of that map. And remember one thing—" I ran my voice down to a whisper. "No badges. Not until you've got some support. It wasn't too long ago that cops wouldn't even come into this neighborhood, their chances of getting out were so bad."

The Isaacsons both nodded, and then Sara and I went out into the hallway, stopping when the man with the nightstick stepped in front of us. "Now suppose youse tell me what's all dis about an investigation? Is you cops or ain't you?"

"This is a—private matter," I answered. "My friends are staying—to wait for the resident." I automatically went for my billfold and produced ten dollars. "You can just act like you never saw them."

"For ten bucks?" the man said with a nod. "For ten bucks I'd forget me own muddah's face." He cackled once. "Not dat I remember it, ta begin wit!"

Sara and I got outside quickly, and started to walk quietly north and then west, hoping to catch a streetcar at Broadway without any trouble. This would be the trickiest part of our journey, though I

didn't want to tell her as much: there were only two of us now, and one of those two was a woman. In the sixties or seventies any Five Points gang worth its salt would have laid me out and had their way with Sara before we'd gotten a block from Baxter Street. I was just praying that, with dissipation having replaced violence as the neighborhood's chief pastime in recent years, we'd be able to squeak out unnoticed.

Remarkably, we did. By nine forty-five we were on our way up Broadway, and just a few minutes later our streetcar crossed Houston Street and we jumped off. Unconcerned, now, with whether or not we were spotted together at headquarters, Sara and I rushed into the building as soon as we reached it, then bulled our way up and into Theodore's office, which was empty. A detective told us that the president had gone home for dinner but was expected back soon—the half-hour wait that followed was maddening. When Theodore did arrive he was a bit alarmed to find us present, but on hearing our news he came alive and began barking orders throughout the second-floor hallway. As he did, a thought occurred to me, and I motioned to Sara, indicating the staircase.

"The note," I explained, as we went downstairs and toward the front door. "The letter to Mrs. Santorelli—if we can confront Beecham with that, it may help break him down."

Sara liked the idea, and once outside on Mulberry Street we grabbed a hansom and made for Number 808 Broadway. I wouldn't call our mood exactly ebullient as we dashed north, but we were quietly alive to the real possibilities of the moment, enough so that our cab ride seemed to take an eternity.

When we entered Number 808 I was moving so fast that I failed to notice, and nearly tripped over, a rather large gunnysack that someone had left in the vestibule. Crouching down I saw a tag attached to the closed top of the bag: NR. 808 B'WAY—6TH FLOOR. I glanced up at Sara and saw that she, too, was examining the sack and the tag.

"You haven't been ordering produce, have you, John?" she asked, a bit wryly.

"Don't be ridiculous," I answered. "Must be something for Marcus and Lucius."

I studied the sack for a few more seconds, then shrugged and

reached down to undo the twine that bound its mouth. The cord was twisted into a complex knot, however, so I pulled out a penknife and slit the thick fabric of the bag from top to bottom.

Out onto the floor, like so much meat, fell Joseph. There were no obvious marks on his body, but the pallor of his skin made it instantly clear that he was dead.

CHAPTER 42

It took the coroner at the Bellevue morgue better than six hours to determine that Joseph's life had ended when someone jammed either a thin knife, such as a stiletto, or a large needle up under the base of his skull and into his brain. A night spent smoking cigarettes and pacing the hallways of the morgue did nothing for my ability to make sense of this information, when it finally came: I thought briefly of Biff Ellison, and of the quiet, efficient way he settled scores with a similar weapon; yet even in my shocked grief I couldn't picture Ellison being responsible. Joseph wasn't one of his boys, and even if Biff had had some new ax to grind with our investigation, such a murderous move would almost certainly have been preceded by an emphatic warning. So unless Byrnes and Connor had coerced Ellison into helping them (a possibility so unlikely as to be impossible), I could think of no explanation and no culprit, save one: Beecham. Somehow, he'd found a way to get close to the boy, despite all my warnings.

My warnings. As Joseph's little body was wheeled out of one of the morgue's autopsy rooms, it occurred to me for what must have been the thousandth time that it was meeting me that had brought the boy to such an unhappy end. I had tried to prepare him for every possible danger—but how could I have foreseen that the greatest of those dangers would be to speak to me in the first place? And now here I was at the morgue, telling the coroner that I'd arranged for a funeral and that everything was to be taken care of properly, as if it mattered whether the boy's body was buried in a nice patch of Brooklyn ground or thrown into the tidal currents of the East River and pulled out to sea. Vanity, arrogance, irresponsibility—all through the night my mind had been pulled back to what Kreizler had said after Mary Palmer's murder: that in our dash to defeat evil, we had only given it a wider field in which to run its own wretched course.

Lost in thoughts of Kreizler as I wandered out of the morgue and into the dawn, I was perhaps less surprised than I might otherwise have been to see my old friend sitting in his uncovered calash. Cyrus Montrose was in the driver's seat and he offered a small, sympathetic inclination of his head when he saw me. Laszlo smiled and stepped down from the rig as I stumbled over.

"Joseph…," I said, my voice cracking from the cigarettes and brooding silence of the night.

"I know," Laszlo said. "Sara called. I thought you might need some breakfast."

I nodded weakly and got into the carriage with him. Cyrus urged the horse Frederick forward with a quiet click of his tongue, and soon we were heading west on Twenty-sixth Street very slowly, though the traffic at that early hour was light.

After several minutes I leaned back and rested my head on the folded cover of the calash, sighing heavily and staring at the half-lit, cloudy sky. "It had to be Beecham." I mumbled.

"Yes," Laszlo answered quietly.

I turned my head toward him without picking it up. "But there was no mutilation. I couldn't even see how he'd been killed, there was so little blood. Nothing but a small hole at the base of the skull."

Laszlo's eyes went thin. "Quick and clean," he said. "This wasn't one of his rituals. This was pragmatic. He killed the boy to protect himself —and to send a message."

"To me?" I asked.

Kreizler nodded. "Desperate as he is, he won't go easily."

I began to shake my head slowly. "But how—*how*? I *told* Joseph, told him everything we'd learned. He *knew* how to identify Beecham. Hell, he called me yesterday afternoon, to double-check on the details."

Kreizler's right eyebrow arched. "Really? Why?"

"I don't know," I said in disgust, pulling out yet another cigarette. "Some friend of his had been approached by a man who wanted to take him away. To a—castle above the city, he said. Something like

that. It did sound like it might've been Beecham, but the man had no facial spasms."

Laszlo turned away, and spoke carefully: "Ah. Then you didn't remember?"

"Remember?"

"Adam Dury. He told us that when Japheth was hunting, his spasms went away. I suspect that when he stalks these boys—" Seeing the effect his words were having on me, Kreizler cut his explanation short. "I'm sorry, John."

I threw my unlit cigarette into the street and clutched my head with both hands. Of course he was right. Hunting, stalking, trapping, killing —they all calmed Beecham's spirit, and that calm was reflected in his face. Whoever the boy, the street cruiser, that Joseph had referred to was, he might in fact have been accosted by our man. Joseph himself certainly had been. All because I had forgotten a detail…

Kreizler put a hand on my shoulder as the calash rolled on, and when I next looked up we'd come to a stop outside Delmonico's. I knew that the restaurant wouldn't be open for another hour or two, but I also knew that if any man could arrange an off-hours meal, it was Kreizler. Cyrus got down from the driver's seat and helped me out of the carriage, saying softly, "There you go. Mr. Moore—get a little food in you." I found my walking legs and followed Laszlo to the front door, which was opened by Charlie Delmonico. Something about the look in his enormous eyes told me that he knew all the details.

"Good morning, Doctor," he said, in about the only tone of voice that I could've stood to have heard at just that instant. "Mr. Moore," he went on, as we came inside. "I hope you will make yourselves entirely comfortable, gentlemen. If there is anything at all I can do…"

"Thank you, Charles," Kreizler answered.

I touched the man's elbow and managed to whisper, "Thanks, Charlie," before we entered the dining room.

With unfailing psychological insight, Kreizler had selected for our breakfast the only place in New York where I might have been able to either collect myself or eat anything at all. Alone in the silent main dining room at Del's, with the light that came through the windows soft enough to allow my shattered nerves to begin to heal, I actually managed to consume several bites of cucumber fillets, Creole eggs,

and broiled squab. But even more important, I found that I was able to talk.

"Do you know," I murmured, soon after we'd sat down, "that I was actually thinking—was it yesterday?—that I could still feel sympathy for the man, despite all he'd done. Because of the context of his life. I thought that I finally knew him."

Kreizler shook his head. "You can't, John. Not that well. You can come close, perhaps, close enough to anticipate him but in the end neither you nor I nor anyone else will be able to see *just* what he sees when he looks at those children, or feel *precisely* the emotion that makes him take up the knife. The only way to learn of such things would be…" Kreizler turned to the window with a faraway look. "Would be to ask him."

I nodded weakly. "We found his flat."

"Sara told me," Laszlo said, shaking himself a bit. "You've done brilliantly, John. All of you."

I scoffed at that. "Brilliantly…Marcus doesn't think Beecham will come back to the place. And I've got to say that I agree now. The bloodthirsty bastard's been a step ahead of us all the way."

Kreizler shrugged. "Perhaps."

"Did Sara tell you about the map?"

"Yes," Laszlo said, as a waiter brought us two glasses of fresh tomato juice. "And Marcus has identified it—it's a chart of the city's water supply system. Apparently the entire network's been refurbished over the last ten years. Beecham probably stole the map from the Public Records Office."

I had a sip of juice. "The water supply system? What the hell does *that* point to?"

"Sara and Marcus have ideas," Kreizler answered, taking some sautéed potatoes with artichoke hearts and truffles from a small platter. "I'm sure they'll tell you."

I looked right into those black eyes. "Then you're not coming back?"

Kreizler glanced away quickly, evasively. "It isn't possible, John.

Not yet." He tried to brighten as the Creole eggs arrived. "You've set your plan for Sunday—the Feast of the Baptist."

"Yes."

"It will be an important night for him."

"I suppose."

"The fact that he's left his—his *trophies* behind indicates a crisis of some sort. By the way, the heart in the box? His mother's, I suspect." I only shrugged. "You realize, of course," Laszlo went on, "that Sunday is the night of the benefit for Abbey and Grau at the Metropolitan?"

My jaw fell open and my eyes strained in disbelief. *"What?"*

"The benefit," Kreizler said, almost cheerfully. "The bankruptcy has destroyed Abbey's health, poor fellow. For that if for no other reason we must attend."

"We?" I squeaked. "Kreizler, we're going to be hunting a murderer, for God's sake!"

"Yes, yes," Laszlo answered, "but later. Beecham hasn't struck before midnight thus far. There's no reason to think he will on Sunday. So why not make the wait as pleasant as possible, and help Abbey and Grau at the same time?"

I dropped my fork. "I know—*I'm* losing my mind. *You're* not actually saying any of this, you can't be—"

"Maurel will be singing Giovanni," Kreizler said enticingly, shoving some squab and eggs into his face. "Edouard de Reszke will be Leporello, and I hardly dare tell you who's scheduled for Zerlina…"

I huffed once indignantly, but then asked, "Frances Saville?"

"She of the legs," Kreizler answered with a nod. "Anton Seidl conducts. Oh, and Nordica sings Donna Anna."

There was no doubt about it—he'd just described a truly memorable night of opera, and I was momentarily distracted by the prospect. But then a stabbing sensation hit my gut as a picture of Joseph came into my head, wiping out all fantasies about pleasant evenings. "Kreizler," I said coldly, "I don't know what's happened that lets you sit here and talk so casually about the opera, as if people we *both* know hadn't

been—"

"There's nothing *casual* in what I'm saying, Moore." The black eyes went dead, and a cool but ferocious sort of determination hardened the voice: "I'll make a deal with you—come with me to *Giovanni,* and I'll rejoin the investigation. And we *will* end this affair."

"You'll rejoin?" I said, surprised. "But when?"

"Not before the opera," Laszlo answered. I was about to protest, but he held up a firm hand. "I can't be any more specific than that, John, so don't ask me to. Just tell me—do you accept?"

Well, of course I *did* accept—what else was I going to do? Despite everything the Isaacsons, Sara, and I had achieved in recent weeks, Joseph's murder had left me feeling profoundly doubtful about our ability to see the investigation through. The thought of Kreizler coming back was an enormous incentive to keep going, one that allowed me to get through an entire squab before we finally left Del's and headed downtown. He was being mysterious, all right—but Laszlo wasn't capricious about such things, and my money said that he had a good reason for shrouding his intentions. And so I promised to get my opera clothes cleaned, and then shook hands on the deal; though when I said how much I was looking forward to telling the others about the arrangement on my return to Number 808 Broadway, Kreizler requested that I not do so. Above all, I was to say nothing to Roosevelt.

"I don't ask that out of bitterness," Laszlo explained, as I got out of the calash at the northern end of Union Square. "Theodore has been decent and kind in recent days, and diligent in his search for Connor."

"There's still no sign of the man, however," I said, having heard as much from Roosevelt.

Laszlo stared off, seeming oddly detached. "He'll turn up, I suspect. And in the meantime"—he closed the small carriage door—"there are other things to attend to. All right, Cyrus."

The calash rolled away, and I walked downtown.

When I arrived at our headquarters I found a note from Sara and the Isaacsons on my desk, saying that they'd gone home to get a few hours' sleep, after which they planned to join the team of detectives that Theodore had assigned to watch Beecham's building. I took advantage of their absence to stretch out on the divan and try to get

some much-needed rest of my own, though the state I subsequently fell into could hardly have been called a sound sleep. Still, by noon I was feeling improved enough to go back to Washington Square, bathe, and change my clothes. Then I telephoned Sara. She informed me that the rendezvous at 155 Baxter Street was set for sundown, and that Roosevelt himself intended to log a few hours on watch. She said she'd pick me up in a cab, and then we both tried to get a little more rest.

As it turned out, Marcus was quite right about Beecham: by three A.M. Saturday morning there'd still been no sign of the man, and we all began to realize that he almost certainly wasn't going to return to the flat. I told the others about what Kreizler had said concerning Beecham's "trophies"—that if he'd left them behind it indicated some sort of climax to his murderous career was fast approaching—and this notion underlined for us all the importance of devising an ironclad plan for Sunday night. As per our agreement of several weeks earlier, Roosevelt was included in these deliberations, which we undertook Saturday afternoon at Number 808.

Roosevelt had never actually been to our headquarters before, and watching him take in all its intellectual and decorative oddities reminded me strongly of the morning I'd first woken up in the place after being drugged by Biff Ellison. As always with Theodore, curiosity soon became dominant over perplexity: He began to ask so many detailed questions about every object—from the big chalkboard to our small kitchen stove—that we didn't get down to work for almost an hour after his arrival. The session was much like any of the dozens that had preceded it: we all threw out ideas, to be weighed and (usually) rejected, all the while trying to assemble solid hypotheses out of airy speculations. Yet this time I found myself watching the process through Roosevelt's initially bewildered and later fascinated eyes, and thus seeing it from a very fresh perspective. And when he started to pound his fists on the arms of one of the Marchese Carcano's chairs and let out exclamations of approval every time we satisfied ourselves that some bit of reasoning was sound, I gained a new appreciation for the work our team had done and was doing.

We were all agreed on one essential point: that Beecham's map of the New York City water supply system bore some kind of relevance not to his past killings but to his upcoming one. While waiting for Theodore's detectives on the night that we'd first discovered Beecham's flat, Marcus had confirmed his initial theory that the map had been tacked on the wall only recently by making comparative analyses of the wall plaster in different parts of the place. Taking such elements as heat, moisture, and soot into account, Marcus had

satisfied himself completely that the map had not been on the wall even as recently as the night of Ernst Lohmann's murder.

"Splendid!" Theodore judged, giving Marcus a salute. "Precisely why I brought you boys onto the force—modern methods!"

Marcus's conclusion was further backed up by several other factors. First, it was difficult to see what connection Bedloe's Island, Bartholdi's Liberty statue, or indeed any of the other murder sites to date might have had to the city's water system. In addition, the overall notion of such a system, one of the primary purposes of which was to facilitate bathing, might easily have been metaphorically connected in Beecham's mind to the figure of John the Baptist. Add to all this the fact that Beecham seemed to have been both taunting and pleading with us by leaving the map behind, and we felt confident in saying that the thing was somehow conceptually tied to the next killing. These details were accordingly entered on the chalkboard by Lucius.

"Bully," Theodore pronounced as Lucius scribbled. "Bully! This is what I like—a scientific approach!"

None of us had the heart to tell the man that this particular part of our approach was a good deal less scientific than it might have appeared; instead, we took out any and all books we had that related to public works and buildings in Manhattan and embarked on a tour of the island's water supply system.

Each of Beecham's 1896 murders had occurred on the banks of a river, from which we had already deduced that the sight of a large body of water had become a vital emotional component of his murderous rituals. It was therefore important to focus our attention on those elements of the water system that were positioned close to the waterfronts. This didn't leave us with many choices. In fact, it left us, we felt, with only one: the High Bridge Aqueduct and Tower, whose ten-foot pipes had brought clear upstate New York water across the East River and into Manhattan since the 1840s. True, if Beecham had selected High Bridge it would mean his first murder north of Houston Street; yet the simple fact that he had confined his slaughter to Lower Manhattan did not necessarily mean that he was completely unacquainted with the northern end of the island. And it was always possible that Beecham in fact intended to visit some less imposing site on his map—a water main juncture or the like—and was just hoping that we would jump at the more obvious and dramatic High Bridge interpretation.

“But what about the boy’s story?” Theodore asked, deeply frustrated that he could not be more involved in the speculative process. “The ‘castle that overlooks the city,’ and whatnot? Doesn’t that confirm your hypothesis?”

Sara pointed out that, while it might indeed confirm the hypothesis (for the High Bridge Tower, built to equalize water pressure in Manhattan’s inland reservoirs, did indeed resemble a tall castle turret), such confirmation did not necessarily mean that Beecham intended to take his victim there. We were dealing with an excessively perverse and devious mentality, Sara explained to Theodore, one who was well aware of our activities and who would get great pleasure from doing all he could to lead us down a false trail. Nonetheless, it was doubtful that Beecham was aware of our understanding of his need to be near water—indeed, he might not be aware of it himself, and High Bridge Tower therefore stood as the most promising location.

Roosevelt absorbed this information with keen interest, nodding and rubbing his jowl and finally clapping his hands together rather thunderously. “Well done, Sara!” he said. “I don’t know what your family would say if they could hear such talk, but by thunder, I’m proud of you!” So full of genuine affection and admiration were Theodore’s words that Sara forgave their slightly patronizing air and turned away with a satisfied smile.

Roosevelt became more intimately involved in the discussion when the time came to plan the actual disposition of police forces for Sunday night. He wanted to handpick the men who would watch the High Bridge Tower, he said, recognizing that it was a job requiring enormous tact—any sign of police activity, we all knew, and Beecham was likely to bolt. In addition to the High Bridge surveillance, Roosevelt intended to have all bridges and ferry stations closely scrutinized, and extra roundsmen would patrol the waterfronts on both the east and west sides at regular intervals. Finally, detective units would be assigned to all the same disorderly houses that we’d watched on the night of the Lohmann boy’s death, even though we had good reason to believe Beecham would be abducting his victim from another locale.

All that remained was to decide what part Sara, the Isaacsons, and I would play in the drama. The obvious choice was for us to join the surveillance group at the High Bridge Tower, at which point it became necessary for me to announce that I wouldn’t be able to do so until a late hour, as it was my intention to attend the opera with Kreizler.

This brought instant expressions of incredulity to my teammates' faces; but since I'd agreed not to reveal the exact terms of the bargain I'd struck with Laszlo, I could offer no plausible explanation for my behavior. Fortunately, before Sara and the Isaacsons could get a full head of baffled steam going, I got help from an unexpected source: Theodore, who, it turned out, was also planning to attend the benefit performance. Roosevelt explained that it was very unlikely that Mayor Strong would sanction calling out a large part of the police force to put in a night's work on the boy-whore murders. But if Roosevelt were seen at a highly publicized society event, which would also be attended by the mayor and one or two of the other members of the Board of Commissioners, it would help to ensure that the night's activities did not become a focus of attention. Theodore supported the idea of my going to the opera as well, saying it could only heighten such a misdirection of official scrutiny; besides, he said, repeating Kreizler's logic, Beecham had never struck before midnight, and there was no reason to think he'd start now. Roosevelt and I could easily join the hunt once the opera was over.

Faced with this attitude on the part of their highest departmental superior, the Isaacsons reluctantly acquiesced. Sara, on the other hand, eyed me suspiciously, and pulled me aside when the others began to discuss further details of the police deployment.

"Is he up to something, John?" she asked, in a tone that indicated she'd brook no nonsense at this stage of the game.

"Who, Kreizler?" I said, hoping it sounded better than it felt. "No, I don't think so. We made the plan some time ago." Then a ruse: "If you really do think it's a bad idea, Sara, I can easily tell him that—"

"No," she answered quickly, but without looking convinced. "What Theodore says makes sense. And we'll all be at the tower anyway, I can't think why you'd be needed as well." I bridled a bit at that, but discretion demanded I not show it. "Still," Sara went on, "after three weeks without a word it seems odd that he'd choose tomorrow night to reappear." Her eyes roamed around the room as her mind ran through possibilities. "Just let us know if it looks like he's got a scheme."

"Of course." She scrutinized me skeptically again, and my eyes went wide. "Sara, why *wouldn't* I tell you?"

She couldn't answer that; *I* couldn't answer that. Only one person knew the full set of reasons for my secrecy—and he wasn't prepared to

reveal them.

Important as it was that we all be well rested for Sunday's undertakings, I felt it even more imperative that we return to the streets one more time Saturday night, in order to make at least a minimal effort to locate the young street cruiser that Joseph had mentioned to me. The odds of finding such a boy without either a name or a description were, admittedly, fairly long; and they only got longer as the night wore on. In addition to combing those Lower East Side, Greenwich Village, and Tenderloin blocks that were known to harbor such characters, we revisited all of the disorderly houses that proferred boy-whores. But in every one, we met with the same dumbfounded and usually dismissive response. We were looking for a boy, we'd say; a boy who worked the streets; a boy who might be planning to quit the game soon (even though we knew that if Beecham was following his pattern he would've told the boy to keep his departure quiet); and a boy who'd been a friend of Joseph, from the Golden Rule—yes, the same boy who'd been murdered. Whatever small chance we might've had of finding any leads was generally destroyed by this last statement: Everyone we interviewed figured that we were looking for Joseph's killer, and no one wanted to be implicated or involved in any way. By midnight we had to accept it—if we were going to find the boy, we were going to find him with Beecham, hopefully before he'd been killed.

That thought was sobering enough to send us all on our respective ways home. It was now quite apparent that there was something very different about this latest prospect of facing Beecham, and it wasn't simply the fact that we knew his name and a great deal about his history: it was the inescapable feeling that the confrontation that was almost upon us—and which had largely been arranged, even if unconsciously, by Beecham himself—might be far more dangerous for us than we'd ever suspected. True, we'd assumed since the beginning that a strong desire to be stopped was evident in Beecham's behavior; but we now understood that that desire had a cataclysmic, even apocalyptic, side to it, and that his being "stopped" could very well entail great violence to those who performed the service. Yes, we would be armed, and together with our official auxiliaries we would outnumber him by tens and perhaps hundreds to one; yet in many ways this man had faced greater odds throughout his nightmarish life, and—simply by surviving—had beaten them. Then, too, the line on any race is not determined by the statistical record alone; it takes into account the intangibles of breeding and training as well. If one entered such factors into our current undertaking, the outlook changed dramatically, even given our side's superior numbers and

armaments—in fact, I was not at all sure that, thus calculated, the odds were not decidedly in Beecham's favor.

CHAPTER 43

It is never easier to understand the mind of a bomb-wielding anarchist than when standing amid a crush of those ladies and gentlemen who have the money and the temerity to style themselves "New York Society." Suited, gowned, bejeweled, and perfumed, the fabled Four Hundred top families in the city, along with their various relations and hangers-on, can shove, snipe, gossip, and gorge with an abandon that the amused onlooker might find fascinating but the unfortunate interloper will deem nothing short of deplorable. I was one such interloper on Sunday evening, the twenty-first of June. Kreizler had asked me (strangely, it seemed even then) to meet him not at Seventeenth Street but in his box at the Metropolitan before the benefit performance, making it necessary for me to take a cab to the "yellow brewery" and then fight my way up the house's narrow staircases alone. Absolutely nothing brings out the killer instinct in the upper crust of New York Society like a charity function; and as I squeezed and pushed through the vestibule, trying to coax movement out of *grandes dames* whose clothing and physical proportions were suited only to stationary pursuits, I occasionally ran into people I'd known during my childhood, friends of my parents who now turned away quickly when they caught my eye, or simply bowed in a minimal way that declared unmistakably, "Please, spare me the embarrassment of actually having to speak with you." All of which was fine as far as I was concerned, except that they generally wouldn't then step aside and allow me to get by. By the time I reached the building's second tier my nerves, along with my clothes, had been thrown into disarray, while my ears were ringing with the din of several thousand perfectly idiotic conversations. Remedy was at hand, however: I sliced my way through to one of the pocket bars under a staircase, downed a quick glass of champagne, grabbed hold of two more, and then made directly and determinedly for Kreizler's box.

I found Laszlo already in it, studying the evening's program as he sat in one of the rear seats. "My God!" I said, falling into a chair next to him without spilling a drop of my champagne. "I haven't seen anything like this since Ward McAllister died! You don't suppose he's risen from the grave, do you?" (For the benefit of my younger readers, Ward McAllister had been Mrs. Astor's social *éminence grise,* the man who actually devised the Four Hundred system, basing it on the number of people who could fit comfortably into that great lady's ballroom.)

"Let's hope not," Laszlo answered, turning to me with a welcoming —and welcome—smile. "Though one can never be truly certain about such creatures as McAllister. Well, Moore!" He put his program aside and rubbed his hands together, continuing to look much happier and healthier than he had during our last several encounters. He eyed my champagne. "You appear to be well prepared for an evening among the wolves."

"Yes, they're all out tonight, aren't they?" I said, scanning the Diamond Horseshoe. I started to move to a forward seat, but Kreizler held me back.

"If you wouldn't mind, Moore, I'd prefer that we sat in the back, tonight." To my questioning look he answered, "I'm in no mood to be scrutinized this evening."

I shrugged and resettled myself next to him, then continued to investigate the audience, turning soon to box 35. "Ah, I see Morgan's brought his wife. Some poor actress will be out a diamond bracelet or two tonight, I suspect." I looked down at the sea of bobbing heads below us. "Where in hell are they going to put all the people who are still outside—the orchestra seats are already full."

"It'll be a miracle if we can even hear the performance," Kreizler said, with a laugh that puzzled me—it wasn't the sort of thing he would usually have found amusing. "The Astor box is so overloaded it looks as though it'll collapse, and the Rutherford boys were already too drunk to stand at seven-thirty!"

I'd taken out my folding glasses and was scrutinizing the other side of the horseshoe. "Quite a gaggle of girls in the Clews' box," I said. "They don't look *precisely* like they came to hear Maurel. High-stakes husband-hunting, would be my guess."

"The guardians of the social order," Kreizler said, holding his right

hand out toward the house with a sigh. “On parade, and don’t they make a sight!”

After giving Kreizler a baffled glance I said, “You’re in a rather bizarre mood—not drunk yourself, are you?”

“As sober as a judge,” Laszlo answered. “Not that any of the judges *here* are sober. And let me hasten to add, Moore, in reply to that very concerned look on your face, that I have not taken leave of my senses, either. Ah, there’s Roosevelt.” Kreizler held up his arm to wave, then winced a bit.

“Still giving you trouble?” I asked.

“Only occasionally,” he answered. “It really wasn’t much of a shot. I shall have to take that up with the man—” Kreizler seemed to catch himself as he glanced at me, and then he brightened deliberately. “Someday. Now, tell me, John—where are the other members of the team at this moment?”

I could feel that the “very concerned” look was still on my face, but at this last question I finally shrugged and let it go. “They’ve gone up to High Bridge with the detectives,” I said. “To get in position early.”

“High Bridge?” Kreizler repeated eagerly. “Then they’re expecting it to be High Bridge Tower?”

I nodded. “That was our interpretation.”

Kreizler’s eyes, quick and electric to that point, became positively brilliant with excitement. “Yes,” he murmured. “Yes, of course. It was the only other intelligent choice.”

“Other?” I said.

Shaking his head quickly he replied, “Nothing of importance. You didn’t tell them about our arrangement?”

“I told them where I was going,” I answered, a bit defensively. “But I didn’t tell them exactly why.”

“Excellent.” Kreizler sat back, looking deeply pleased. “Then there’s no way Roosevelt can know…”

“Know what?” I asked, starting to get that old familiar feeling that I’d walked into the wrong theater during the middle of a performance.

“Hmm?” Kreizler noised, as if barely conscious of my presence. “Oh. I’ll explain it later.” He pointed suddenly to the orchestra pit. “Splendid—here’s Seidl.”

Out to the podium strode the nobly profiled, long-haired Anton Seidl, once Richard Wagner’s private secretary and now the finest orchestra leader in New York. His Roman nose graced by a pair of pincenez that somehow managed to stay on their perch throughout the vigorous exertions that characterized his conducting style, Seidl commanded instant respect in the pit; and when he turned his stern glare on the audience many of the chattering society types also grew hushed and fearful for several minutes. But then the houselights went down and Seidl slashed into the powerful overture of *Don Giovanni,* at which the noise in the boxes began to grow again. Soon they were at a more annoying level than ever; Kreizler, however, continued to sit with a look of utter serenity on his face.

Indeed, for two and a half acts Laszlo endured that boorish audience’s ignorance of the musical miracle that was taking place onstage with confounding equanimity. Maurel’s singing and acting were as brilliant as ever, and his supporting cast—particularly Edouard de Reszke as Leporello—were superb; their only thanks, however, was the very occasional round of applause and ever more distracting talk and bustle in the house. Frances Saville’s Zerlina was a thorough delight, though her singing talents did not stop the besotted Rutherford boys from cheering in a way that indicated she was indistinguishable in their minds from the average Bowery concert hall dancer. During the intermissions the crowd behaved largely as it had before the performance—like a great herd of glittering jungle beasts—and by the time Vittorio Arimondi, playing the dead Commendatore, began to pound on Don Giovanni’s door I was utterly sick of the general atmosphere and utterly bewildered as to why Kreizler had asked me to come.

I soon had the beginnings of an answer. Just as Arimondi swept onstage and held a statuesque finger out toward Maurel, with Seidl whipping the orchestra into a crescendo such as I have rarely heard, even at the Metropolitan, Laszlo calmly stood up, took a deep, satisfied breath, and touched my shoulder.

“All right, Moore,” he whispered. “Let’s go, shall we?”

“Go?” I said, getting up and stepping with him to the darkest recesses of the box. “Go where? I’m supposed to meet Roosevelt after the performance.”

Kreizler didn't answer, but calmly opened the door to the saloon, out of which stepped Cyrus Montrose and Stevie Taggert. They were dressed in clothes that closely resembled Kreizler's and mine. I was surprised and very happy to see them both, especially Stevie. The boy looked quite recovered from the beating he'd taken at Connor's hands, though he was obviously uncomfortable in such attire, and not very happy to be at the opera.

"Don't worry, Stevie," I said, taking a swipe at his shoulder. "It's never been known to actually kill anyone."

Stevie stuck a finger into his collar and tried to loosen the thing with a few tugs. "What I wouldn't give for a cigarette," he mumbled under his breath. "Don't have one, do you, Mr. Moore?"

"Now, now, Stevie," Kreizler said sternly, gathering up his cloak. "We've discussed that." He turned to Cyrus. "You're clear on what to do?"

"Yes, sir," Cyrus answered evenly. "At the end of the performance Mr. Roosevelt will want to know where you've gone. I'll tell him I don't know. Then we're to bring the rig to the place you spoke of."

"Taking—?" Kreizler asked leadingly.

"Taking an indirect route, in case we're followed."

Laszlo nodded. "Good. All right, Moore."

As Kreizler slipped into the saloon, I looked back into the house and realized that no other members of the audience would have been able to see this exchange taking place—such was obviously why Laszlo had asked that we sit in the back of the box. Then, glancing at Stevie as he continued to suffer under the yoke of evening clothes, I had another realization: these two were supposed, by supplying vaguely similar silhouettes, to give the impression that Kreizler and I were still in the theater. But for what purpose? Where was Kreizler rushing off to? Questions continued to proliferate in my head, but the man with the answers was already on his way out of the building; and so, with Don Giovanni bellowing in horror as he descended into the inferno, I followed Kreizler to the Broadway doors of the Metropolitan.

His mood, when I caught up to him, was one of exhilarated determination. "We'll walk," he said to the doorman outside, who then waved off a group of anxious cab drivers.

“Kreizler, damn it,” I said in exasperation, as I followed him to the corner of Broadway. “You might at least tell me where we’re going!”

“I should’ve thought you would have determined that by now,” he answered, waving me on. “We’re going to find Beecham.”

The words hit me rather hard, making it necessary for Laszlo to grab me by my lapel and pull me along. As I stumbled with him to the curb and then waited for the traffic to let us cross, Laszlo chuckled once. “Don’t worry, John,” he said, “it’s only a few blocks, but that should give us enough time to attend to all your questions.”

“A few blocks?” I said, trying to shake off my daze as we wound through horse manure and rolling carriages and finally got across Broadway. “To High Bridge Tower? It’s *miles* away!”

“I’m afraid Beecham won’t be *at* High Bridge Tower tonight, Moore,” Kreizler answered. “Our friends are destined for a rather frustrating vigil.”

As we proceeded down Thirty-ninth Street, the noise of Broadway faded behind us and our voices began to echo off the darkened row houses that stretched on toward Sixth Avenue. “And where the hell is he going to be, then?”

“You can determine that for yourself,” Kreizler answered, his stride picking up ever more speed. “Remember what he left behind in his flat!”

“Laszlo,” I said angrily, grabbing his arm. “I’m not out here to play games! You’ve got me abandoning people I’ve been working with for months, not to mention leaving Roosevelt fairly well in the lurch—so just stand still and tell me what the hell is going on!”

For a moment he managed to trade his enthusiasm for compassion. “I’m sorry about the others, John—truly I am. If I could have thought of another way…But there isn’t one. Please understand, if the police are at all involved in this it will result in Beecham’s death—I’m as certain of that as I am of anything. Oh, I don’t mean that Roosevelt himself would play a part, but during the trip to the Tombs, or while he’s in his cell, there will be an incident of some kind. A detective, or a guard, or some other prisoner, perhaps—probably claiming self-defense—will most assuredly put an end to the rather large set of problems that you and I have come to know as John Beecham.”

“But Sara,” I protested. “And the Isaacsons. Surely they deserve—”

“I couldn’t take that chance!” Kreizler declared, continuing east with insistent steps. “They work for Roosevelt, they all owe their positions to him. I couldn’t take the chance that they wouldn’t tell him what I was planning. I couldn’t even tell *you* all of it, because I knew you’d pledged to share everything you knew with Theodore—and you’re not a man to break your word.”

That mollified me a bit, I must admit; but as I hustled to keep up with him, I continued to press hard for details. “But what *are* you planning? And how the hell long have you been planning it?”

“Since the morning after Mary was killed,” he answered, with just a trace of bitterness. We came to another halt at the corner of Sixth Avenue, and Kreizler turned to me, the black eyes still gleaming. “My initial withdrawal from the investigation was a purely emotional reaction, one that I probably would have reconsidered, in time. But on that morning I realized something—since *I* had become the main focus of our antagonists’ attention, my withdrawal was likely to give the rest of you a free hand.”

I paused to consider that. “And it did,” I judged after a few seconds. “We never saw any of Byrnes’s men again.”

“*I* did, however,” Kreizler answered. “And still do. I’ve had quite a time, leading them around the city. It was absurd, really, but I stayed with it, trusting that the rest of you—combining your own abilities with what you’d learned during our time together—would be able to find a set of clues that would make a definite prediction of Beecham’s next move possible.” As we started through the Sixth Avenue traffic, Laszlo held up his right hand, counting off considerations: “I’d already made the same assumptions you had about the twenty-first of June—Saint John the Baptist’s Day. That left the determination of victim and location in your hands. I had great hopes that your young friend Joseph would give us help with the first of those questions—”

“He very nearly did,” I said, a now familiar pang of guilt and pain tugging at me. “As it was, he gave us an idea of who the victim *wouldn’t* be—we knew he didn’t come from one of the disorderly houses, that he was a street cruiser.”

“Yes,” Laszlo said, as we got to the east side of the avenue. “The boy did great service, and his death was a tragedy.” He hissed once, in deep remorse. “There are moments when this entire case, when everything and everyone that comes into any kind of contact with the life of John Beecham, seem destined for a tragic end…” His

determination came suddenly bounding back: “At any rate, what Joseph said about a ‘castle,’ from which the intended victim would be able to view the entire city, was an unqualified help—that is, when considered in conjunction with what you found at Beecham’s flat. That really was a superb piece of work, by the way—your finding the place, I mean.”

I only nodded and smiled in appreciation, having by now abandoned any further attempt to question the course of action that Kreizler had evidently settled on for the evening. If such comparatively speedy aquiescence seems surprising, it must be remembered that for weeks I had worked without the benefit of Laszlo’s friendship and guidance, and had often felt their absence keenly. To be once again walking purposefully by his side, to hear him dissecting the case in such a deliberate and confident manner, and, above all, to know that Sara, the Isaacsons, and I, along with the investigation itself, had been in his thoughts throughout the time we’d spent apart, all gave me a great deal of joy and relief. I knew that he was now working somewhat at cross-purposes with the rest of our team; and it was easy to see that his wild-eyed enthusiasm contained an unpredictable and perhaps uncontrollable element; but such considerations seemed to count for little as we made our way down Thirty-ninth Street. We were on the correct trail, I was certain of that much, and my own excitement soon made short work of the small, prudent voice in the back of my mind that said that we were only two, rushing in to perform a task that had originally been planned for scores.

I gave Kreizler a conspiratorial glance. “When Roosevelt finds that we’ve left the opera,” I said, “he’ll tear the city apart looking for us.”

Laszlo shrugged. “He’d be better off using his head. He has the clues he needs to determine our whereabouts.”

“The clues? You mean the things in Beecham’s flat?” I grew puzzled yet again. “But it was what we found there that led us to decide on High Bridge Tower—that and the business about a castle.”

“No, John,” Kreizler answered, his hands moving again as he spoke. “It was *part* of what you found at Beecham’s flat that led you to such a conclusion. Think again. What did he leave behind?”

I went over it in my mind. “The collection of eyes…the map…and the box with the daguerreotype on it.”

"Correct. Now think what conscious or unconscious considerations caused him to leave only those things. The eyes tell you unmistakably that you have the right man. The map gives you a general idea of where he'll strike next. And the box—"

"The box tells us the same thing," I interjected quickly. "The daguerreotype lets us know that we've found Japheth Dury."

"True," Kreizler said emphatically, "but what about the thing that's *in* the box?"

I wasn't following him. "The heart?" I mumbled in confusion. "It was an old, dried-up heart—you think it was his mother's."

"Yes. Now, put the map and the contents of the box together."

"The city water system…and the heart…"

"Now add what Joseph said."

"A castle or a fort," I answered, still not getting it. "A place from which you can see the whole city."

"And…?" Kreizler urged.

As we turned and began to walk up Fifth Avenue, the answer hit me like a cartload of bricks. Stretching away for two blocks to the north and one block to the west, its walls as high as the buildings around them and as prodigious as those of the fabled city of Troy, was the Croton Reservoir. Built in the Egyptian mausoleum style, it was indeed a castlelike fortress, on whose ramparts New Yorkers often strolled, enjoying the splendid, panoramic views of the city (as well as of the man-made lake within) that the structure afforded. In addition, the Croton was the main distributing reservoir for all of New York; it was, quite simply, the *heart* of the city's water system, the center to which all aqueducts fed and from which all mains and arteries drew their supply. Astounded, I turned to Kreizler.

"Yes, John," he said, smiling as we approached the thing. *"Here."* Then he pulled me in close under the walls of the reservoir, which were deserted at that late hour, and lowered his voice. "The rest of you no doubt discussed the possibility that Beecham *knows* our first move would be to watch the waterfronts—but in the absence of a suitable alternative, you remained focused on those areas." Laszlo looked up and, for the first time that night, displayed some little bit of apprehension. "If my guess is correct, he's up there now."

“This early?” I asked. “I thought you said—”

“Tonight is very different,” Kreizler answered quickly. “Tonight he has set his table early, the better to be ready for his guests.” Reaching inside his cloak, Kreizler produced a Colt revolver. “Take this, will you, Moore? But do *not* use it, unless you must. There is much I want to ask this man.”

Kreizler started to move toward the massive main gate and staircase of the reservoir, which strongly resembled the entranceway to an Egyptian temple of the dead. Given our purpose that night, the similarity caused a strong shiver to rattle my bones. I stopped Laszlo as we neared the portal.

“One thing,” I whispered to him. “You say Byrnes’s men have been following you—how do you know they’re not watching us now?”

There was something about the blank way in which he looked back at me that was deeply unsettling: like a man who has divined his fate and has no intention of trying to avoid it.

“Oh, I don’t know that they’re not,” he answered, quietly and simply. “In fact, I’m counting on the fact that they are.”

With that, Laszlo entered the gate and took to the broad, dark stairs that wound up through the massive wall to the promenade. I shrugged helplessly at his cryptic words and was about to follow him, when a faint glimmer of brass somewhere on the other side of Fifth Avenue suddenly caught my eye. I stopped short and tried to locate the source.

On Forty-first Street, beneath one broad-boughed tree whose leaves provided an effective refuge from the glow of the arc streetlamps on the avenue, was an elegant black brougham, whose lanterns were glittering ever so slightly. Both horse and driver appeared to be asleep. For a moment the sense of dread that I felt about climbing the reservoir walls heightened dramatically; but then I shook it off and moved to catch up to Kreizler, telling myself that there had to be a great many people in New York besides Paul Kelly who owned elegant black broughams.

CHAPTER 44

As soon as we reached the top of the reservoir's walls I realized the potentially disastrous error I'd made in allowing Kreizler to talk me into coming to this place alone with him. The eight-foot-wide promenade atop the walls, ringed on either side by four-foot iron fences, was some six stories from the ground, and when I looked down I saw the streets from an angle that instantly recalled all the rooftop work we'd done in recent months. That reminder was forbidding enough on its own. But when I looked straight out and around me I saw the tar surfaces and multitudinous chimneys of the buildings that surrounded the reservoir, all of which made it even more plain that while we might not be standing on a rooftop *per se,* we had nonetheless reentered the lofty realm over which John Beecham was acknowledged master. We were in *his* world once again, only this time we'd arrived by way of a perverse invitation; and as we strode silently down toward the Fortieth Street side of the walls, the waters of the reservoir stretching out to our right and reflecting a bright moon that had suddenly appeared and was still ascendant in the clear night sky, it became apparent that our status as hunters was in very serious jeopardy: we were on the verge of becoming prey.

Familiar yet still troubling images began to flicker in my head like the projected films I'd seen at Koster and Bial's theater with Mary Palmer: each of the dead boys, trussed and cut to pieces; the long, terrible knife that had done that cutting; the remains of the butchered cat at Mrs. Piedmont's; Beecham's bleak flat in Five Points, and the oven in which he claimed to have cooked the "tender ass" of Giorgio Santorelli; Joseph's lifeless body; and finally a picture of the killer himself, formed out of all the clues and theories we'd collected during our investigation, yet still, for all our work, no more than a vague silhouette. The infinite black sky and innumerable stars above the

reservoir offered no comfort or refuge from these horrific visions, and civilization, as I once again glanced down toward the streets of the city, seemed terribly far away. Each of our careful footsteps tapped home the message that we had come to a lawless place of death, a place where the hopeful invention of fearful man that I clutched in my hand would likely prove a feeble defense, and where the answers to greater mysteries than those we'd spent the last dozen weeks trying to unravel would be made plain with brutal finality. Despite all these anxious thoughts, however, I never once considered turning back. Perhaps Laszlo's conviction that we were going to end this business on those walls that night was infectious; whatever the reason, I didn't leave his side, even though I knew, as certainly as I've ever known anything, that we stood an excellent chance of never returning to the streets below.

We heard the sobbing before we saw the boy. There were no lights on the promenade, only the moon to guide us, and as we turned onto the Fortieth Street side of the pathway a one-story stone structure that had been built atop the walls to house the reservoir's control mechanisms loomed up spectrally in the distance. The sobs—high-pitched, desperate, and yet somehow muffled—seemed to be coming from somewhere near it. When we'd gotten to a point some forty-five feet from the structure, I caught a vague glimpse of human flesh glowing in the moonlight. We took a few steps closer, and then I made out plainly the figure of a naked young boy on his knees. His hands had been bound behind his back, causing his head to rest on the stone surface of the promenade, and his feet were similarly tied. A gag had been wrapped around his head, holding his painted mouth open at a painful angle. His face was glistening with tears; but he was alive, and, just as surprisingly, he was alone.

Reflexively, I took a quick step forward, intending to help the unfortunate youth. Kreizler grabbed my arm and held me back, whispering urgently, "No, John! That is exactly what he intends for you to do."

"What?" I whispered back. "But how do you know he's—"

Kreizler nodded, his eyes directing me toward the top of the control house.

Rising just above the roof of the thing and reflecting the soft light of the moon was the same balding head that I'd seen above Stephenson's Black and Tan the night that Cyrus was attacked. I felt my heart jump, but quickly sucked in air and tried to stay calm.

“Does he see us?” I whispered to Kreizler.

Laszlo’s eyes had gone thin, but he betrayed no other reaction to the scene. “Undoubtedly. The question is, does he know *we’ve* seen *him*?”

An answer came immediately: the head disappeared, the way an animal in the wild will do—completely and with astonishing speed. By now the bound boy had caught sight of us, and his stifled sobbing had changed to more emphatic sounds that, though incomprehensible as words, were plainly appeals for help. Another picture of Joseph appeared in my head, doubling my already driving desire to go and help this next intended victim. But Kreizler kept his grip on my arm.

“Wait, John,” he whispered. “Wait.” There was a small doorway leading from the promenade into the control house, and Kreizler pointed at it. “I was here this morning. There are only two ways out of that structure—back onto the promenade or down a flight of stairs to the street. If he doesn’t appear…”

Another full minute went by with no sign of life either in the doorway or on the roof of the control house. Kreizler looked very puzzled. “Is it possible he’s run?”

“Maybe the risk of actually getting caught was too much for him,” I answered.

Kreizler weighed that, then studied the still-pleading boy. “All right,” he finally decided. “We’ll approach, but very slowly. And keep that revolver handy.”

The first few steps we took down that stretch of the promenade were stiff and difficult, as if our bodies knew and were rejecting the danger that our minds had decided to accept. But after we’d covered ten feet or so without catching a glimpse of our antagonist we began to move more freely, and I became more convinced that Beecham had, in fact, been more intimidated by the prospect of capture than he had expected to be and fled to the street. I felt a sudden, powerful feeling of joy at the thought that we were actually going to prevent a killing, and allowed myself a small smile—

Hubris, as they say. Just as self-congratulation allowed my grip on the revolver to weaken ever so slightly, a dark form vaulted over the iron fence on the outer (or street) side of the promenade and laid a stunning blow across my jaw. I heard a thunderous crunching sound, which I now realize was made by the bones in my neck as my head snapped around, and then all was darkness.

I couldn't have been unconscious for very long, since the shadows thrown by the moon had not advanced significantly when I woke up; nonetheless, my head felt groggier than if I'd been asleep for days. As my vision cleared I became aware of several pains, some sharp and some dull, but all acute. There was my jaw, of course, and my neck. My wrists were burning, and my shoulders ached mightily; but the single most piercing discomfort came from under my tongue. I groaned as I tried to dislodge something from that area, then spat at the ground, producing one of my canine teeth, along with what seemed a quart of blood and saliva. My head felt like a solid block of Pittsburgh steel, and I couldn't lift it more than a few inches. Eventually I realized that this was due to more than the blow I'd received: my wrists were tied behind me to the top of the iron fence on the inner side of the promenade, and my ankles were similarly bound to the bottom of the iron divider, causing my head and upper body to hang out painfully over the stone pathway. Lying beneath my face on that surface was the Colt revolver I'd been holding.

I groaned again and kept trying to lift my head, finally succeeding just enough to be able to turn and catch sight of Kreizler. He was similarly bound, though he seemed quite conscious and unharmed. He gave me a smile.

"Are you back, John?" he said.

"Uhhh," was all I was able to say in response. "Where's…"

With effort Kreizler nodded toward the control house.

The bound boy lay where we'd first seen him, though by now his urgent cries had reverted to fearful whimpers. Before him stood an enormous figure clad in unremarkable black clothing, whose back was to Kreizler and me. The man was slowly removing his garments and placing them neatly to one side of the promenade. In a few minutes he was entirely naked, revealing more than six feet of powerful muscles. He stepped forward to the boy—who, judging by the adult lines that were just beginning to show in the face and body, must've been about twelve—and picked his painted head up by the hair.

"Crying?" the man said, in a low, emotionless voice. "A boy like you *ought* to cry…"

The man released the boy's head and then turned to face Kreizler and me. His anterior musculature was as fully developed as his posterior—from the shoulders down he was a remarkable physical

specimen. I strained my neck to look up at his face, furrowing my brow as I did. I don't know precisely what I was expecting, but I certainly wasn't prepared for the banality of those features. There was something of Adam Dury in the way the skin was pulled tightly over the man's skull, as well as in the thinness of his hair. The eyes, too, were like his brother's, too small for the big, bony head in which they sat. The right side of the face drooped a bit, though it wasn't at that moment spasming, and the big jaw was set firmly; but all in all it was a common sort of face, one that exhibited no hint of the terrible turmoil that boiled without respite deep within the large head. He looked rather as though the construction of this horrendous scene was not altogether different from counting heads for the census.

That fact, I suddenly realized, was the most frightening thing I'd yet learned about John Beecham. In a very businesslike manner he bent down and took his enormous knife from out of his clothes, then walked over to where Kreizler and I were hanging. His chiseled body bore very little hair, allowing it to reflect the light of the moon brightly. He stood in a wide stance and leaned down to look first Kreizler and then me in the face.

"Only two," he said, shaking his head. "That was stupid—*stupid.*" He lifted the knife, which closely resembled the one that Lucius had shown us at Delmonico's, and pressed the flat of its blade against Laszlo's right cheek, letting it play languorously around the lines of my friend's face.

Laszlo watched Beecham's hand move, and then said cautiously, "Japheth—"

Beecham growled viciously and then brought the back of his left hand hard across Laszlo's head. "Don't you say that name!" He seethed violently. The knife went back under one of Laszlo's eyes, and Beecham pressed it firmly enough to bring a bead of blood from Laszlo's cheek. "Don't you say that name…" Beecham drew himself up and took a deep breath, as if he felt his outburst had been somewhat undignified.

"You've been looking for me," he said—and then, for the first time, he smiled, showing huge, yellowing teeth. "You've been trying to watch me, but I've been watching you." The smile vanished as quickly as it had appeared. "You want to watch?" He indicated the boy with his knife. "Then watch. He dies first. *Cleanly.* Not you, though. You're stupid and worthless—you couldn't even stop me. Stupid, worthless animals—you I'll dress *alive.*"

As he strode back to the boy I whispered to Kreizler, “What’s he going to do?”

Laszlo was still shaking off the effects of the blow he’d taken. “I believe,” he answered, “that he intends to kill that boy. And I believe he intends for us to observe it. After which…”

I saw that a small stream of blood was running down Kreizler’s cheek and jaw. “You all right?” I asked.

“Ah,” Laszlo noised in reply, showing remarkably little concern over our prospective fates, “it’s the stupidity that hurts the most. We chase a man who’s an expert mountaineer, and then we’re surprised when he negotiates a simple masonry wall to get behind us…”

Beecham was by now crouching over the bound boy. “Why did he take off his clothes?” I asked.

Laszlo studied our attacker for a moment. “The blood,” he said at length. “He wants to keep it off his clothes.”

Having put his knife aside for a moment, Beecham began to run his hands over the young, writhing body before him.

“But is that, in fact, the only reason?” Laszlo went on, some surprise showing in his voice.

Beecham’s face continued to betray no sign of anger or lust or any other feeling. He probed the boy’s torso and limbs as an anatomy instructor might have done, pausing only when he laid hands on the young genitals. After fondling them for a few minutes he stood and stepped behind the boy, stroking the upturned buttocks with one hand and his own member with the other.

I grew sickened at the thought of what I believed must come next, and turned away. “But I thought—” My quiet mumble was almost a protest. “I thought he didn’t rape them.”

Laszlo continued to observe. “That may not mean that he hasn’t tried to,” he judged. “This is a complex moment, John. He claimed in his note that he didn’t ‘soil’ the boys. But did he try?”

I picked my head back up to see Beecham still stroking the boy and himself, failing to produce an erection in his own organ. “Well,” I said in disgust, “if he wants to do it why—”

"Because he *doesn't,* in fact, want to," Kreizler replied, his already strained neck straining further to nod his head as he began to fully comprehend what was happening. "He feels an obsessive force pushing him toward it, as toward the killing—but it isn't desire. And while he can force himself to kill, he can't force himself to rape."

As if in response to Laszlo's analysis of the scene, Beecham suddenly howled in deep-seated frustration, raising his thick arms to the heavens and shaking throughout his body. Then he looked down again, stepped quickly around to the boy's front end once more, and slipped his long-fingered hands around the young throat.

"No!" Kreizler suddenly called. "No, Japheth, for God's sake, it isn't what you want to—"

"Don't say that name!" Beecham shouted again, as the boy squealed and twisted madly in his grip. "I'll kill you, you filthy—"

Suddenly, from my left, a somehow familiar voice came out of the darkness:

"You ain't killing anybody, you miserable bastard."

Sore as my neck was, it turned quickly to catch sight of Connor, walking down the promenade and holding an impressive Webley .445 revolver. Behind him came two figures who had by now taken on the status of old acquaintances: the same thugs who'd come after Sara and me in the Santorellis' tenement, who'd dogged Laszlo's and my steps during our trip to visit Adam Dury, and whom I'd unceremoniously ejected from the Boston–New York train.

Connor's shifty eyes went thin as he stepped toward Beecham. "You hear me? Get the hell away from that kid."

Very slowly, Beecham released his grip on the boy. His face became an absolute blank, and then it changed dramatically: for the first time an emotion—terrible fear—became apparent in the widening of the eyes. Just when it seemed that those organs could open no further, they began to blink, rapidly and uncontrollably.

"Connor!" I said, finally overcoming my astonishment. Turning to Laszlo for an explanation, I saw him eyeing our apparent rescuer with a look of both hatred and satisfaction.

"Yes," Laszlo said evenly. "Connor…"

“Get those two down,” Connor said to one of his men, as he leaned over to pick up Kreizler’s Colt. He kept the Webley trained on Beecham as the man to his right moved somewhat grudgingly to free first Laszlo and then me. “And you,” Connor said to the cowering murderer. “Get your fucking clothes on, you blasted sodomite.”

But Beecham made no move to comply. His expression became more fearful, he huddled closer to the wall—and then the spasming began. Initially it was slow, involving only the blinking of the eyes and a tug at the right corner of the mouth; but soon the entire right side of the face was contracting violently and at a quick clip, producing a pathetic effect that I must admit would have seemed, under other circumstances, cruelly laughable.

As he watched this transformation take place, a look of blatant disgust came into Connor’s bearded face. “My God,” he said. “You sick, miserable bastard…” He turned to the man on his left. “Mike—cover him up, for God’s sake.” The man went over, picked up Beecham’s clothes, and threw them at him. Beecham grabbed the garments and held them close, but didn’t try to dress himself.

Once Laszlo and I were back standing on the promenade we both spent a few seconds trying to loosen up our painfully cramped arms and shoulders, while Connor’s thugs went over to stand behind their chief again.

“Aren’t you going to untie the boy?” Laszlo said, his voice still marked by harsh bitterness.

Connor shook his head. “Let’s get a few things straight, first, Doctor,” he said, as if, despite the Webley, he was afraid of what Kreizler might do. “Our business is with this one here”—he indicated Beecham—“and only with him. You get on out of here and there’ll be nothing more to it. The whole business ends tonight.”

“Indeed it does,” Laszlo replied. “But not in the way that you anticipate, I’m afraid.”

“Meaning?” Connor asked.

“Meaning that our leaving is out of the question,” Kreizler answered. “You made it so when you fouled my home with your murderous presence.”

Connor shook his head quickly. “Now, just you wait, Doctor—I wanted none of that! I was doing my job, following the orders I’d been

given, and that little bitch—" Kreizler's face betrayed open rage and he took half a step forward. Connor gripped the Webley tighter. "Don't do it, Doctor—don't give me a reason. Like I say, we're only here to do this one, but you know full well I'd be happy to make it the three of you. That might not please my bosses—but if you give me cause, so help me, I'll shoot you down."

For the first time, Beecham seemed to fix his attention on what was happening around him. His face still spasming, he turned to look at Connor and his thugs; then, in a sudden flurry, he scurried over near Laszlo's legs.

"They—" he said tremulously. "They're going—going to kill me."

Connor chuckled once gruffly. "Yes, it's dead you'll be when they take you off this wall, you damned fool butcher. All of this trouble over you, and what are you? A poor excuse for a man, with your whining and crawling." Connor began to swagger a bit in front of his cohorts. "Hard to believe, ain't it, fellas? That—*thing* there is what this has all been about. Just because his idea of fun is to fuck little boys and then cut them up."

"Liar!" Beecham suddenly bellowed, balling his fists but staying in a crouching stance. "You filthy liar!"

At that, Connor and his men began to laugh, exacerbating Beecham's emotional turmoil. As the mocking howls went on, I walked over to stand by Beecham without knowing why, then gave the three laughing fools in front of me a disapproving scowl that produced no effect. Turning to Kreizler in hope of getting some guidance, I saw that he was staring down the promenade past Connor and his men, his face a picture of anticipation. His mouth fell open, and for no reason that I could divine he suddenly shouted:

"Now!"

And then all hell broke loose. With the speed and precision that only years of professional training can breed, an ape of a man leapt up and over the inner promenade fence and crushed Connor's gun-wielding hand with a stout section of lead pipe. Before the other two thugs could react several lightning combinations of blows from two enormous fists laid them both out on the promenade. The howling Connor soon shared the same fate. Then, just for good measure, the newcomer—his face hidden under a miner's cap—leaned over each man's head in succession and delivered a series of resounding blows

with the lead pipe. It was a clinic in violence that was awesome to behold—but my joy at the attack faded considerably when the performer stood up and finally revealed himself.

It was Eat-'Em-Up Jack McManus, former prizefighter and current enforcer of decorum at Paul Kelly's New Brighton Dance Hall. Tucking his piece of pipe into his pants, McManus picked up both the Colt and the Webley and then stepped toward me. I braced myself, reasonably calculating that Laszlo and I would be the next victims of his pugilistic artistry; instead, McManus straightened his shabby jacket, spat hard into the waters of the reservoir, and handed me the guns. I trained the Colt on Beecham as Jack slowly walked up to Kreizler, raised a hand, and touched the brim of his cap respectfully.

"Well done, Jack," Laszlo said, at which I almost hit the pathway beneath me in a dead faint. "Bind them, if you would, and gag the two bigger men. The one in the middle I'll want to talk to when he comes around." Laszlo studied Connor's body, evidently impressed by McManus's work. "Or perhaps I should say, *if* he comes around…"

McManus touched his cap again, crossed back in front of me, then produced several lengths of rope and two handkerchiefs and carried out Laszlo's instructions like a patient, laboring ox. Kreizler, in the meantime, went quickly to the bound boy, and began to free his mouth, hands, and feet.

"It's all right," Laszlo said soothingly, as the youth continued to sob and whimper uncontrollably. "It's all right, you're quite safe now."

The boy looked up at Laszlo, eyes wide with terror. "He was going to…"

"What he was going to do is no longer important," Laszlo answered with a small smile, producing a handkerchief and wiping the boy's face. "What *is* important is that you're safe. Here—" Laszlo retrieved his somewhat mangled opera cloak from the promenade and wrapped it around the shaking young man.

With everything under control, at least for the moment, I satisfied my curiosity by approaching the fence on the street side of the promenade and taking a quick look over it. A few feet below, strung before our arrival and held in place by climbing pitons much like the one that Marcus had found at Castle Garden, was a length of stout rope. As Kreizler had suspected, getting around and behind us had been no great job for an experienced climber like Beecham. I turned

back around and looked at our now beaten foe, shaking my head at the sudden, baffling way in which the tide had turned.

Jack McManus had finished the job of binding Connor's men, and he looked to Kreizler expectantly. "Well, Jack," Laszlo said. "All secure? Good. We won't be needing you further. But again—my thanks."

McManus touched his cap one last time, then turned and strode back down the dark promenade without saying a word.

Kreizler turned to the boy again. "Let's get you inside, shall we? Moore, I'm just going to put our young friend here in the control house."

I nodded, keeping the Colt leveled at Beecham's head as Laszlo and the boy disappeared inside. Still huddling and spasming, Beecham had begun to let out a quick, guttural little whimper of his own. It didn't appear that he'd give me any trouble, but I wasn't taking any chances. Quickly scanning the area, I saw his knife lying on the pathway, and moved to pick it up and tuck it into the back of my own pants. Glancing at the unconscious Connor, I noticed that he had a pair of manacles clipped to his belt. I retrieved them and tossed them to Beecham.

"Here," I said. "Get these on."

Slowly and absentmindedly, Beecham fit the manacles around his wrists, closing first one and then the other with some difficulty. I searched Connor's pockets and found the key to the restraints, after which I noticed that there was a small bloodstain on Connor's shirt. Unbuttoning the dirty garment and then pulling it aside, all the while keeping my gun on Beecham, I saw that Connor had a long, half-healed wound in his side, which had apparently been torn back open by Jack McManus. It was the injury, I realized, that Mary Palmer had inflicted before Connor had flung her down Kreizler's stairs.

"Good for you, Mary," I said softly, standing away from Connor.

Kreizler came back out of the control house, running a hand through his hair and surveying the scene before him with evident, if rather amazed, satisfaction. Then he looked my way self-consciously, as if he knew what was coming.

"You," I said, evenly but very firmly, "are going to tell me what in hell is going on around here!"

CHAPTER 45

Laszlo had just opened his mouth to reply when the sound of a sharp whistle echoed up from Fortieth Street. Kreizler ran to peer over the street-side fence of the promenade, and I quickly joined him, looking down to see Cyrus and Stevie in the calash.

"I fear that explanations will have to wait, Moore," Kreizler said, turning toward Beecham again. "Cyrus and Stevie's arrival means that the opera has been over for at least three quarters of an hour. By now Roosevelt's suspicions have been thoroughly aroused. He'll have checked with the others at High Bridge Tower, and when they learn of our disappearance…"

"But what do you plan to do?" I asked.

Kreizler scratched his head and smiled a bit. "I'm not terribly sure. My plans didn't quite provide for this situation—I wasn't entirely certain that I'd still be alive, even given our friend McManus."

That stung me, and I didn't mind showing it: "Oh," I huffed, "and I suppose I would have been dead, too!"

"Please, Moore," Kreizler said, waving his hand impatiently. "There simply isn't time."

"But what about Connor?" I demanded, pointing to the former detective's prostrate form.

"We shall hold Connor for Roosevelt," Laszlo replied sharply, crossing over to where Beecham sat huddled. "Though he deserves far worse!" Crouching down to stare Beecham in the face, Laszlo drew a deep breath to calm himself, then held a hand in front of our

prisoner's eyes and moved it back and forth. Beecham seemed utterly oblivious.

"The boy has come down from the mountains," Kreizler mused at length. "Or so it would seem." I took his point: if the man we'd first encountered on the walls that night had been the evolved version of the cool, sadistic young trapper who'd once roamed the Shawangunks, then the terrified creature now before us was the inheritor of all the terror and self-loathing that Japheth Dury had felt at every other moment of his life. Evidently aware that there was little to fear from the man so long as he was in this mental state, Laszlo took Beecham's jacket from him and draped it around the man's huge, bare shoulders. "Listen to me, Japheth Dury," Kreizler said, in an ominous tone that got Beecham to finally stop swaying and moaning. "You've a great deal of blood on your hands. That of your parents, not least of all. Should your crimes become known, your brother, Adam—who is still alive and still attempting to carry on an honest, decent life—will most certainly be privately destroyed and publicly hounded. For that if for no other reason, the part of you that is still human must pay close attention to me."

Though Beecham's eyes remained quite glassy, he nodded slowly. "Good," Laszlo said. "The police will be here soon. They may or may not find you waiting when they arrive, depending on just how honest you are with me. I'm going to ask you just a few questions now to determine your ability, as well as your willingness, to cooperate. Answer these questions truly and we may be able to arrange a less severe fate than that which the people of this city will demand. Do you understand?" Beecham nodded again, and Kreizler produced his ubiquitous little notebook and a pen. "All right, then. The basic facts…"

Laszlo then launched into a fast, condensed, yet calmly worded review of Beecham's life, beginning with his childhood as Japheth Dury and going into some detail concerning the murder of his parents. As Beecham answered these queries, all the while confirming more and more of the hypotheses that we'd formulated during our investigation, his tone became increasingly weak and helpless, as if in the presence of this man who somehow knew him as well as he knew himself there was no choice other than complete submission. For his part, Kreizler became ever more satisfied by Beecham's earnest attempts to cooperate with his inquisition, finding in them proof positive that a hidden yet still strong part of the murderer's mind had indeed craved this moment.

I suppose that I, too, should have been deeply gratified at the results of this initial interview; yet as I watched Beecham answer Laszlo's questions—his voice growing ever more compliant and even childish, with none of the threatening, arrogant tone he'd used when we were his prisoners—I became powerfully irritated, disturbed at the very core of my spirit. This irritation soon became outrage, as if this man had no right to exhibit any pitiable human qualities in light of all he'd done. Who was this enormous grotesque, I thought, to sit there confessing and sniveling like one of the children he'd slaughtered? Where was all the violence, cruelty, arrogance, and unstoppability that he'd displayed on other nights? As these and similar questions shot through my head, my anger mounted rapidly, until suddenly, unable to contain the feeling any longer, I stood up straight and bellowed:

"Shut up! Shut the hell up, you miserable coward!"

Both Beecham and Laszlo immediately grew silent and looked up at me in shock. Beecham's facial spasms intensified dramatically as he eyed the Colt in my hand, while Laszlo's attitude soon changed from one of stunned surprise to chastising comprehension.

"All right, Moore," he said, not asking for an explanation. "Go and wait inside with the boy, then."

"And leave you with him?" I said, my voice still trembling with anger and passion. "Are you insane? Look at him, Kreizler—this is *him,* this is the man who's responsible for all the blood we've seen! And you sit here letting him convince you that he's some kind of—"

"John!" Kreizler said, stopping me. "*All right.* Go and wait for me inside."

I looked past Kreizler at Beecham. "Well? What *are* you trying to convince him of?" I leaned down, keeping the Colt pointed at Beecham's head. "Figure you can still get out of it, don't you?"

"Damn it, Moore!" Kreizler said, grabbing my wrist but unable to make me move the gun away. "Stop!"

I drew closer to Beecham's spasming face. "My friend thinks that if you aren't afraid to die it's proof that you're crazy," I seethed. With Laszlo still trying to disarm me, I shoved the barrel of the revolver up against Beecham's throat. "Are you afraid to die—*are you?* To die, like the boys you—"

"Moore!" Kreizler shouted again.

But I was far past listening. Struggling to get my thumb on the hammer of the Colt, I pulled it back in a jerk, causing Beecham to let out a desperate little cry and then pull back from me like a trapped animal. "No," I seethed at him. "No, you're not crazy—you *are* afraid to die!"

With stunning suddenness, the air all around us was consumed by a gunshot. A resonant, slapping sort of impact sounded from somewhere just under my hand, and then Beecham rocked backward in a jerk, revealing a crimson-black hole in the left side of his chest that wheezed with the sound of escaping air. Fixing his small, straining eyes on me Beecham let his manacled hands fall and then slumped over, his jacket falling from his shoulders as he did.

I've killed him, I thought clearly. There was neither joy nor guilt in the realization, just a simple acknowledgment of fact—but then, after Beecham had crumpled to the stone pathway, my gaze fell on the hammer of my Colt: it was still cocked. Before I could get my confused brain to make any sense of this sight, Laszlo had jumped over to Beecham and made a cursory examination of the bullet wound. Shaking his head as the unpleasant sound of gushing air and blood continued to come out of Beecham's chest, Laszlo made a fist and looked up furiously. His glare, however, was directed past me; and following it, I turned around slowly.

Connor had somehow slipped his bonds, and was standing in the center of the promenade. His back was bent with dizziness and pain, and he was clutching his bleeding side with his left hand as he held a small, crude twin-barreled pistol with the other. A twisted smile came into his bleeding mouth, and then he staggered forward a step or two.

"It ends tonight," he said, holding the gun higher and pointing it at us. "Drop it, Moore."

I complied, slowly and carefully; but just as the Colt touched the pathway another gunshot cut through the air—this one from farther off—and then Connor jerked forward as if he'd been struck hard in the back. He fell on his face with a small grunt, revealing a hole in his jacket out of which blood began to pump immediately. The powder smoke from the shot Connor had fired at Beecham had not even cleared when a new figure stepped forward on the dark promenade and became visible in the moonlight.

It was Sara, pearl-gripped revolver in hand. She stared down at Connor for an instant without betraying any emotion, then looked up at Kreizler and me.

"I thought of this place just after we'd gotten into position at High Bridge Tower," she said tightly, as the Isaacsons appeared in the darkness behind her. "When Theodore said you'd left the opera, I knew…"

I let out an enormous breath. "And thank God you did," I said, wiping my brow with my hand and then picking up the Colt.

Laszlo stayed in a crouch by Beecham, but looked up at Sara. "And where is the commissioner?"

"Out searching," Sara said. "We didn't tell him."

Laszlo nodded. "Thank you, Sara. You had little reason for such consideration."

Sara's expression remained impassive. "You're right."

Beecham suddenly let out with a bloody, choking cough, and Kreizler got an arm under his neck, bringing the large head up. "Detective Sergeant?" Laszlo said, at which Lucius rushed over to assist him.

Taking a quick look at Beecham's chest, Lucius shook his head definitively. "It's no good, Doctor."

"Yes, yes, I know," Kreizler snapped. "I just need—rub his hands, will you? Moore, get those blasted manacles off. I just need a few minutes." As I freed the dying man's hands Laszlo reached into his pocket, brought out a small vial of ammonia salts, and wafted them under Beecham's nose. Lucius began to slap and rub at Beecham's palms, while Laszlo's aspect became steadily more concerned and his movements steadily more agitated, until they reached a level of near desperation. "Japheth," he began to murmur, softly but pleadingly. "Japheth Dury, can you hear me?"

Beecham's eyelids fluttered for an instant and then opened, the dulling orbs beneath them rolling helplessly about in his head. Finally he fixed them on the face that was very close to his own. He wasn't spasming, now, and his expression was that of a terrified child who looks to a stranger for help that he somehow knows he isn't going to get.

"I—" he gasped, coughing up a little more blood. "I'm—going to die…"

"Listen to me, Japheth," Laszlo said, wiping blood from the man's mouth and face as he continued to cradle the head. "You must listen to me—what did you see, Japheth? What did you see when you looked at the children? What made you kill them?"

Beecham's head began to shake from side to side quickly, and then a shudder went through his body. He turned his terrified gaze to the heavens and opened his jaw wider, revealing the big teeth, which were now coated with blood.

"Japheth!" Laszlo repeated, sensing that the man was slipping away. *"What did you see?"*

As his head continued to shake, Beecham's eyes shifted back to Laszlo's pleading face. "I—have never known—" he gasped, the tone both apologetic and pleading. "I—have never—known! I—didn't—they—"

The shaking in his face spread throughout his body for an instant, and then he grabbed Laszlo by the shirt. Face still full of mortal fear, John Beecham spasmed one final time, spat some blood mixed with vomit out one side of his mouth, and grew still. His head rolled away from Kreizler, the eyes finally losing their expression of terror.

"Japheth!" Kreizler said once more; but he knew it was too late. Lucius reached up and closed Beecham's eyes, at which Kreizler finally lowered the dead man's head back down to the cold stone beneath it.

No one spoke for a minute or two, and then there was a sound: another whistle from below. I stood up, moved to the outer promenade fence, and looked down to Cyrus and Stevie, who were pointing toward the West Side urgently. I waved to them in acknowledgment and then went to Kreizler.

"Laszlo," I said carefully, "offhand I'd say Roosevelt's on his way. You'd better get ready to explain—"

"No." Though Kreizler did not lift his head, his voice was firm. "I won't be here." When he finally sat up straight and looked around, I could see that his eyes were red and moist. He looked from me to Sara, then at Marcus, and finally to Lucius, nodding as he did. "You have all given me your help and your friendship—perhaps more of each than I've been entitled to. But I must ask that you continue to do

so for just a little while longer." Standing up, Kreizler spoke to Lucius and Marcus. "Detective Sergeants? I'll need your assistance in removing Beecham's body. You say Roosevelt's coming by way of Fortieth Street, John?"

"I'd say so," I answered, "based on the way those two are carrying on down there."

"Very well, then," Kreizler went on. "When he arrives, Cyrus will direct him up here. The detective sergeants and I will take the body out through the Fifth Avenue gate"—Laszlo walked to the street-side fence and issued a command by waving one hand—"where Stevie will be waiting." He stepped over to Sara and took her by the shoulders. "I wouldn't blame you if you refused to be any part of this, Sara."

She looked for a moment as if she were about to erupt with a spiteful indictment—but then she simply shrugged and put her pistol away in a fold of her dress. "You haven't been honest with us about this part of it, Doctor," she said. Her hard look softened. "But if it hadn't been for you we never would have had the chance in the first place. I'm prepared to call it even."

Laszlo pulled her close and embraced her. "Thank you for that," he murmured, and then stepped back. "Now, then—in the control house you will find a rather terrified boy wrapped in a fairly decent cloak of mine. Go to him, would you, and see to it that Roosevelt asks him no questions before we've had time to get downtown."

"Downtown?" I said, as Sara moved toward the control house doorway. "Wait a minute, Kreizler—"

"There's no *time,* John," Laszlo said, moving toward Marcus and speaking to both him and Lucius. "Detective Sergeants? The commissioner is your superior, and I will understand if—"

"You don't have to ask, Doctor," Lucius answered before Laszlo could finish. "I think I know what you've got in mind. I'll be curious to see how it turns out."

"You shall see for yourself," Kreizler answered. "I intend that you shall assist me." He turned to the taller Isaacson. "Marcus? If you wish to exempt yourself, I shall more than understand."

Marcus weighed Kreizler's words for a moment. "It's really the only riddle left to solve, isn't it, Doctor?" he asked.

Kreizler nodded. “Perhaps the most important.”

Marcus took a moment more, then gave a nod of his own. “All right. What’s a little departmental insubordination against the interests of science?”

Laszlo clasped his shoulder. “Good man.” Returning to Beecham’s body, Kreizler grabbed one of the dead arms. “All right, then—let’s proceed, and quickly.”

Marcus got hold of Beecham’s feet, and Lucius draped some of the dead man’s clothes over the torso before taking hold of the remaining limb. Then they lifted the body, Kreizler wincing in some pain as he did, and started down the promenade toward Fifth Avenue.

The prospect of being left up on those walls with no one but two unconscious thugs and Connor’s body to keep me company put new life into my movements and my mouth. “Wait a minute,” I said, following the others. “Wait just a goddamned minute! Kreizler! I know what you’re up to! But you can’t leave me here and expect me to—”

“No time, John!” Kreizler answered, as he and the laboring Isaacsons picked up speed. “I’ll need six hours or so—all will become clear then!”

“But I—”

“You are a true stalwart, Moore!” Kreizler called.

At that I stopped, watching them fade into the deep blue of the promenade and then vanish into the blackness of the Fifth Avenue staircase. “Stalwart,” I mumbled, kicking at the ground and turning back around. “*Stalwarts* don’t get left behind to explain this kind of mess—”

I ceased my little monologue when I heard a commotion inside the control house: Sara’s voice, followed by Theodore’s. They exchanged a few heated words, and then Roosevelt burst out onto the promenade, followed by Sara and several men in uniform.

“So!” Theodore boomed when he caught sight of me. He began to approach, holding up a thick, accusatory finger. “This is my payment for entering into an agreement with what I mistakenly took to be gentlemen! By thunder, I ought to—”

He stopped suddenly when he saw the two bound thugs and the one

corpse. Glancing from the ground to me twice in bewilderment, Theodore directed his finger downward. “Is that *Connor*?”

I nodded and approached, quickly putting my anger with Kreizler aside and then feigning great anxiety. “Yes, and you’re just in time, Roosevelt. We came here looking for Beecham—”

Righteous indignation came back into Theodore for a moment. “Yes, I know,” he bellowed, “and if a pair of my best men hadn’t followed Kreizler’s servants—”

“But Beecham never showed,” I went on. “It was a trap, set by Connor. He was out to—to kill Stevie, actually.”

“Stevie?” Roosevelt echoed incredulously. “Kreizler’s boy?”

I looked at him with deep earnestness. “Roosevelt, Stevie was the only witness to Connor’s murder of Mary Palmer.”

Theodore’s face opened up with comprehension, his eyes going wide behind the spectacles. “Ah!” he noised, now pointing his finger upward. “Of course!” The brow wrinkled again. “But what happened?”

“Fortunately, Commissioner,” Sara said, having correctly perceived that my powers of invention were weakening, “the detective sergeants and I arrived in time.” She indicated the body with more confidence and certainty than I knew she felt. “That’s a bullet of mine you’ll find in Connor’s back.”

“*Yours,* Sara?” Theodore said incredulously. “But I don’t understand.”

“Neither did we,” Sara said, “until you brought us wind of what John and the doctor were up to. Although by the time we figured out where they were likely to be, you’d already left High Bridge Tower. But if I were you, Commissioner, I’d get back up there—the rest of your detectives are still on watch, and the killer hasn’t struck yet.”

“Yes,” Theodore said, considering it all. “Yes, I suppose you’re right about—” He suddenly stood up straight, smelling the ruse. “Just a moment. I see what we have here. If all that’s true, then kindly tell me this—who is that boy in there?” He pointed his finger at the control house.

“Honestly, Roosevelt,” I insisted, “you’d better—”

“And where are the rest of them—Kreizler and the Isaacsons?”

“Commissioner,” Sara said, “I can tell you—”

“Oh, yes,” Roosevelt answered, waving us off. “I can see what sort of thing’s happening here. Conspiracy, is it? That’ll be fine! I’m delighted to oblige! Sergeant!” One of the men in uniform snapped to and approached. “Have one of your men take charge of that boy in there—and then place both of these people under arrest! I want them taken to Mulberry Street immediately!” Before Sara and I could say anything in response, Theodore brought the finger around once more and wagged it in our faces. “I’m going to give you two a very unpleasant reminder of just who’s in charge of the Police Department in this city!”

CHAPTER 46

It was all so much hot air, of course. Oh, Roosevelt dragged us down to Mulberry Street, all right, and locked us up for a few hours in his office, where we got one hell of a lecture about honor and trust and living up to one's word; but eventually I told him the truth about what had happened that night, although not until I was fairly sure that Kreizler and the Isaacsons had had enough time to get where they were going. I explained to Theodore that I hadn't really lied to him, since I myself hadn't known what was going on before I showed up at the opera; indeed, I said, I *still* didn't have explanations for many of the things that had happened up on the reservoir walls, although I intended to get them. And I promised that as soon as I did, I'd come straight to Mulberry Street and share the information. Roosevelt calmed down considerably as I was saying all this; and when Sara pointed out that the important thing, about which there could be no doubt, was that Beecham was dead, Theodore's mood began to brighten considerably. As he'd told us several weeks earlier, the successful conclusion of the case meant a great deal to him personally (although, given the affair's many complexities, he'd never be able to make much hay out of it professionally); and by the time Sara and I finally got up to leave his office, at about four o'clock, Theodore had traded criticism of some of that night's developments for characteristically effusive praise of our team's work as a whole.

"Unconventional, without doubt," he clicked, putting a hand on each of our shoulders as he walked us out, "but, all in all, a magnificent effort. Magnificent. Think of it—a man with no connection to his victims, a man who could have been anyone in this city, identified and stopped." He shook his head with an appreciative sigh. "No one would ever believe it. And to get Connor in the bargain!" I saw Sara wince just a bit at that; but she worked hard to

conceal the reaction. “Yes, I will very much enjoy hearing just how our friend Kreizler cooked up that last part of his scheme.” Theodore rubbed his jowl and stared at the floor for a few seconds, then looked up at us again. “Well, then—what will you all do now?”

It was a simple question, yet one whose implications were, I suddenly discovered, thoroughly unpleasant. “What will we—?” I echoed. “Well, we—that is—I don’t really know. There are—details to tie up.”

“Of course,” Roosevelt answered. “But, I mean to say, the case is over—you’ve won!” He turned to Sara, as if expecting agreement.

She nodded slowly, looking as confused and uncomfortable as I felt. “Yes,” she finally managed to say, in the face of Theodore’s expectant expression.

There followed a long, peculiar pause, during which the vague but unsettling emotion that had been produced by the thought of the case being over took a stronger hold on each of us. In an attempt to banish it, Theodore changed the subject deliberately.

“At any rate,” he said, with a slap of his hands to his chest, “a fortunate and intriguing end. Timely, as well. I leave tomorrow for St. Louis.”

“Ah, yes,” I said, happy to talk about something else. “The convention. It’ll be McKinley, I take it?”

“On the first ballot,” Theodore replied with mounting gusto. “The convention is merely a formality.”

I gave him a needling smile. “Picked out a house in Washington yet?”

As always, Theodore grew stormy at any suggestion that he indulged in ambitious maneuvering; but then, remembering that I was an old friend who would never have questioned his basic motives, he let the storm pass. “Not quite. By thunder, though, what possibilities! Perhaps the Navy Department will—”

Sara let out a sudden, uncontrollable laugh, then covered her mouth quickly. “Oh,” she said. “I am sorry, Commissioner. It’s just that—well, I never would have thought of you as a *Navy* man.”

“Yes, Roosevelt,” I added, “when you come right down to it, what in

the world do you know about naval matters?"

"Why," he answered indignantly, "I wrote a book on the naval war of 1812—it was very well received!"

"Ah, well," I answered, nodding, "that does make all the difference."

Theodore's smile returned. "Yes, Navy's the place to be. From there we can start planning for a reckoning with those blasted Spaniards! Why—"

"Please," I cut in, holding up a hand. "I don't want to know."

Sara and I moved to the staircase while Theodore stood in the doorway of his office with his hands on his hips. As always his energy seemed not in the least diminished by a long night of activity, and his beacon of a smile was still visible when we reached the end of the dark hall.

"Don't want to know?" Theodore shouted after us merrily as we started down the stairs. "But you could come along! Why, with the work you people have done, the Spanish empire shouldn't represent any great challenge! Come to think of it, there's an idea in that—the psychology of the king of Spain! Yes, bring your chalkboard to Washington and we'll decide just the right way to thrash him!"

His voice finally became inaudible as we left the building.

Sara and I walked the short block over to Lafayette Place, still in a kind of shock that prevented our going back over the conclusion of the case in any detail. Not that we didn't want to clarify many of the things that had happened at the reservoir; but we both knew that we didn't possess enough information to do so on our own. And the hard knowledge that we *did* possess was going to take time and wisdom to come to grips with. Of nothing was this more true than the fact that Sara had put an end to a man's life that night.

"I suppose one of us was destined to do it," she said wearily, after we'd turned onto Lafayette Place and begun to walk north. Her eyes stared blankly at the sidewalk. "Although I never would have thought that it would be me…"

"If anyone ever had it coming, Connor did," I said, trying to be reassuring without committing the deadly sin (to Sara's way of thinking) of mollycoddling.

"Oh, I know that, John," she answered simply. "Honestly I do. Still…" Her voice trailed off, and then she stopped and took a deep breath, looking at the quiet street around her. Her eyes continued to wander from darkened building to darkened building, and finally came to rest on mine—then, in a quick motion that surprised me, she put her arms around me and laid her head on my chest. "It's really over now, isn't it, John?"

"You sound sorry," I said, touching her hair.

"A little," Sara answered. "Not for anything that's happened—but I've never had an experience like this. And I wonder how many more I'll be allowed."

I lifted her head by the chin and looked deep into her green gaze. "Somehow, I get the feeling you're done with people *allowing* you to do things. Not that you were ever very good at it, to start with."

She smiled at that, then walked over to the curb. "Perhaps you're right." She turned when she heard a horse's hooves. "Oh, there's good luck—a hansom."

Holding her right hand up to her face, Sara extended her index finger and thumb and, to my consternation, put them in her mouth. She then drew breath and blew hard, producing a whistle that almost split my head open. I clapped my hands to my ears and looked at her in shock, getting another big smile in return.

"I've been practicing that," she said, as the cab clattered over and stopped next to her. "Stevie taught me. It's fairly good, don't you think?" She climbed up into the hansom, still smiling. "Good night, John. And thank you." Rapping on the roof of the cab, she called out "Gramercy Park, driver!" and was gone.

Alone for the first time that night, I took a moment to try to decide just where I was going. I was bone-weary, to be sure, but sleep was somehow out of the question. Strolling through the still streets was definitely called for; not, as I say, to make sense of all that had happened, but simply to absorb the fact that it had. John Beecham was dead: the focus of my life, however gruesome, had been removed, and with a sudden ache of dread I realized that come Monday morning I'd have to decide whether or not I was going to report for duty back at the *Times.* The thought, brief and passing though it was, seemed nothing short of horrible—to spend more days and nights hanging around in front of Police Headquarters, waiting for a lead or a

story to materialize, and then shooting off to get the facts on some bit of domestic violence or some housebreaking on Fifth Avenue…

Without intending to, I'd come to a stop at the corner of Great Jones Street. Looking down the block, I saw that the lights of the New Brighton Dance Hall were still burning bright. Perhaps explanations were not so far off after all, I thought; and then, before I'd consciously decided to go, my feet were carrying me toward the place.

I was still several doors away when I started to hear loud music echoing out of the New Brighton (Paul Kelly employed a much larger and more professional band than the usual three-piece noise gang found in concert halls). Soon raucous laughter, a few drunken screams, and finally the resonant rattle of glasses and bottles joined the din. Not relishing the prospect of actually going inside, I was much relieved to see Kelly emerge from the joint's frosted glass doors just as I arrived. With him was a police sergeant—in uniform—who was laughing and counting a wad of money. Kelly glanced over, caught sight of me, and then elbowed the cop, telling him with a nod of his head to get lost. The sergeant obliged, scurrying obediently away in the general direction of Mulberry Street.

"Well, Moore!" Kelly said, pulling a small snuffbox out of his silk vest and grinning in his handsome way. "You can forget you saw that," he said, inclining his head toward the vanishing cop.

"Don't worry, Kelly," I answered, drawing up to him. "I figure I may owe you one."

"Me?" Kelly chuckled. "Not likely, newshound. I see that you're in one piece, though. From the rumors that're floating around town, I'd say you're damned lucky."

"Come on, Kelly," I said. "I saw your rig tonight—and your man McManus saved our necks."

"Jack?" Kelly opened the snuffbox, revealing a mound of finely ground cocaine. "Why, he didn't tell me. Doesn't *sound* like Jack, though, to go around doing good deeds." Kelly put a little cocaine on one knuckle and snorted it hard, then held the box out to me. "Care for some? I wouldn't myself, but these late nights—"

"No," I said. "Thanks. Listen, the best I can figure is that you made some kind of a deal with Kreizler."

"Deal?" Kelly echoed again, his affected ignorance starting to make

me testy. He took a little more cocaine, then stepped aside when a large, well-dressed man came stumbling out of the New Brighton with two homely, garishly dressed women in tow. Kelly called good night to the man amiably, then turned back to me. “Why in the world would I cut a deal with the good doctor?”

“That’s what I don’t know!” I replied, exasperated. “The only explanation I can think of is that you once said you had a lot of respect for him. That day in your carriage—you said you’d even read a monograph of his.”

Kelly chuckled again. “That’s not likely to make me go against my own interests, Moore. I’m a practical man, after all. Just like your friend Mr. Morgan.” I looked at him blankly, and his smile widened. “Oh, sure. I know all about your meeting with the Nose.”

I thought to ask him *how* in hell he knew, but it really was useless—he obviously wasn’t in a cooperative mood, and I was just giving him sport. “All right,” I announced, taking a few steps away. “I’ve been through entirely too much tonight to stand out here playing who-knows-what with you, Kelly. Tell Jack he’s got a favor coming.”

At that I stormed off, or tried my best to, anyway; but I’d only gotten half the distance to the corner when I heard Kelly’s voice again:

“Say. Moore.” I turned around, and saw him still grinning. “It sounds like you people had a hell of a time.” Putting his snuffbox back in his vest, he cocked his head playfully. “I’m not saying I know anything about it, of course. But ask yourself this when you get a free minute—of all the people who were up there tonight, who do you think is really the most dangerous to the boys uptown?”

I stood there, staring dumbly at Kelly and then at the ground, trying to make sense out of his question. After half a minute, an answer started to form in my overworked brain, and my jaw dropped open a little bit. I glanced back up with a grin and was about to state my reply—but Kelly was nowhere to be seen. I had an idea to go inside after him, but quickly abandoned it: there was no point. I knew what he meant, and understood what he’d done. Paul Kelly, gangland chief, inveterate gambler, and amateur philosopher and social critic, was playing a hunch; and though none of us would likely live long enough to see the ultimate outcome of the game, I suspected that his hunch was correct.

Strangely encouraged, I turned back around and jumped into a

hansom that was sitting outside Kelly's place, fairly well screaming at the driver to take me down to East Broadway in a hurry. As my driver whipped his horse down Lafayette Place and then east on Worth Street I began to chuckle and even hum a bit. "The final riddle," I sang, echoing Marcus's words from earlier in the evening: I wanted to be there when they solved it.

My cab pulled up at the Kreizler Institute at just past four-thirty and parked behind Laszlo's calash. The only sound on the street was that of a baby crying, coming from an open window in one of the tenements opposite Kreizler's two buildings. As I paid off my cabbie and stepped to the street, I caught sight of Marcus, who was sitting on the iron steps of the Institute, smoking a cigarette and running a hand through his hair. He acknowledged me with a nervous wave, and then I went over to peer inside the calash. Stevie was lying on the seat smoking, and when he looked over and saw me he saluted with his cigarette.

"Mr. Moore," he said amiably. "Not bad, these what the detective sergeant smokes. You oughta try one."

"Thanks," I said, turning around. "I think I will. Where's Cyrus?"

"Inside," the boy replied, lying back down. "Making 'em some coffee. They been at it for hours." He took a deep pull on the cigarette and then held it to the sky. "You know, Mr. Moore, you wouldn't figure a stinkhole like this city to have so many stars over it. Seems like the *smell'd* be enough to drive 'em away…"

I smiled and walked away from the calash. "True enough, Stevie," I said, looking beyond Marcus to the ground-floor windows of the Institute: They were brightly lit.

I sat down next to the taller Isaacson. "You're not inside?"

He shook his head quickly, blowing smoke out of his long, handsome nose. "I was. Thought I'd be able to stand it, but—"

"You don't have to tell me," I said, accepting a cigarette from him and lighting it. "*I'm* not going in."

The front door of the Institute opened a crack, and I turned around to see Cyrus poking his head out. "Mr. Moore, sir?" he said. "Would you care for a cup of coffee?"

"If it's *your* coffee, Cyrus," I answered, "most certainly."

He tilted his head and shrugged slightly. “I’m not guaranteeing anything,” he said. “I haven’t tried my hand since I got knocked on the head.”

“I’ll take a chance,” I answered. “How are they doing in there?”

“Getting on toward the end, I believe,” Cyrus answered. “Getting on toward the end…”

But it was another three quarters of an hour before there was any sign of things being wrapped up in Kreizler’s operating theater. During that time Marcus and I smoked, drank coffee, and tried, in some roundabout way, to accustom ourselves to the conclusion of our quest and the coming disbandment of our team. Whatever answers Kreizler and Lucius were uncovering in the operating theater wouldn’t change the fact that Beecham was dead. As the night wore on into morning, I realized just how much this one circumstance was becoming the conditioning force of all our lives.

Finally, at almost five-thirty, the ground-floor door opened and Lucius appeared. He was wearing a leather apron that was stained with many odorous fluids, bodily and other, and he looked utterly exhausted.

“Well,” he said, wiping his hands on a bloodstained towel, “that’s that, I suppose.” Collapsing onto the steps beside us, he produced a handkerchief and mopped at his forehead, as Cyrus came down from the front door behind him.

“That’s that?” Marcus asked, a little annoyed. “What do you mean, that’s that? What’s what, what did you find?”

“Nothing,” Lucius said, shaking his head and closing his eyes. “To all appearances, everything was perfectly normal. Dr. Kreizler’s checking a few last details, but…”

I stood up, tossing the stub of my cigarette into the street. “Then he was right,” I said quietly, as a chill ran up my back.

Lucius hunched his shoulders. “He was right so far as medicine can determine that he was right.”

Marcus continued to study his brother. “Are you *trying* to spoil this?” he said. “If he was right, he was right, don’t bring medicine into it.”

Lucius was about to point out the less than stellar reasoning underlying that statement, but elected instead to sigh and nod. “Yes,” he breathed, “he was right.” Lucius stood up, removed his apron, and handed it to Cyrus. “And I,” he continued, “am going home. He wants us all at Delmonico’s tonight. Eleven-thirty. Maybe by then I’ll be able to eat.” He started to wander off.

“Wait a minute,” Marcus said, as his brother stumbled away. “You’re not leaving *me* to walk home alone—you’ve got the gun, remember. Goodbye, John. See you tonight.”

“Tonight,” I said with a nod. “Good work, Lucius!”

The shorter Isaacson turned, rolling one hand perfunctorily. “Oh. Yes, thanks, John. You, too. And Sara, and—well, I’ll see you later.”

They strolled away down the street, chattering and arguing until they were out of sight.

The ground-floor door of the Institute opened again and Kreizler emerged, putting on his jacket. He looked even worse than Lucius: his face was pale and there were enormous circles under his eyes. It seemed to take him a moment to identify me.

“Ah, Moore,” he finally said. “I didn’t expect you. Though I am, of course, pleased.” Then, to Cyrus: “We’re finished, Cyrus. You know what to do?”

“Yes, sir. The driver with the van should be here in just a few minutes.”

“He’ll take care not to be seen?” Kreizler asked.

“He’s a very reliable man, Doctor,” Cyrus replied.

“Good. Then you can ride with him as far as Seventeenth Street. I’ll drop Moore off at Washington Square.”

Kreizler and I climbed into his rig and roused the slumbering Stevie, who turned the horse Frederick around and urged him gently forward. I didn’t press Laszlo for information, knowing that he would provide it when he’d had a few minutes to collect himself.

“Lucius told you that we found nothing?” he finally asked as we moved at an easy pace back up Broadway.

"Yes," I answered.

"No evidence of either congenital abnormality or physical trauma," Laszlo went on quietly. "Nor of any of the other physical peculiarities that might indicate mental disease or defect. In every way, a perfectly normal, healthy brain." Kreizler leaned back, letting his head rest against the calash's folded cover.

"You're not disappointed, are you?" I asked, a bit confused by his tone. "After all, it proves that you were right—he wasn't crazy."

"It *indicates* that I was right," Kreizler answered evenly. "We know so little about the brain, Moore…" He sighed, but then tried to rouse himself. "However, yes, to the best of our present psychological and medical knowledge, John Beecham was not insane."

"Well," I said, reluctantly recognizing that it was going to be difficult for Kreizler to take any satisfaction from the achievement. "Sane or not, he's no longer a danger. And that matters more than anything."

Laszlo turned to me as Stevie took a left turn onto Prince Street in order to avoid the intersection of Houston and Broadway. "You really didn't feel much pity for him by the end, did you, Moore?" Laszlo asked.

"Ah," I noised uncomfortably. "To be honest, I felt more than I wanted to. *You* certainly seemed shaken up by his death."

"Not so very much by his death," Kreizler answered, producing his silver cigarette case. "By his life. The evil stupidity that created him. And the fact that he died before we could truly study him. The entire thing seems so wretchedly futile…"

"If you wanted him alive," I asked, as Laszlo lit a cigarette, "then why did you say that you were hoping Connor would follow us? You must have known he'd try to kill Beecham."

"Connor," Laszlo said, coughing a bit. "There, I must confess, is something I don't regret about this night."

"Well"—I tried to be judicious—"I mean, he's dead, after all. And he did save our lives."

"Nothing of the kind," Kreizler replied. "McManus would have stepped in before Beecham could have done any real harm—he was

watching the entire time."

"What? Then why did he wait so long? I lost a tooth, for God's sake!"

"Yes," Kreizler answered uneasily, touching the small incision on his face, "he did make rather a close thing of it. But I'd told him not to interfere until he was certain the danger was mortal, because I wanted to observe as much of Beecham's behavior as I could. As for Connor, all I was hoping for from his appearance was that we'd apprehend him. That, or…"

There was a terrible finality and loneliness in Laszlo's voice as he said this, and I knew that I'd better change the subject if I wanted to keep him talking:

"I saw Kelly tonight. I take it you went to him because you had no other option." Kreizler nodded, still staring off with bitterness in his black eyes. "He told me why he agreed to help you. Or rather, he hinted at it. He thinks you're quite a danger to the *status quo* in this society."

Laszlo grunted. "Perhaps he and Mr. Comstock should compare notes. Although if I'm a danger to society, such men as they will be the death of it. Particularly Comstock."

We took a right turn on MacDougal Street, wending our way past small, dark restaurants and Italian cafés toward Washington Square. "Laszlo," I said, after he'd grown silent again, "what did you mean when you told Beecham that you might be able to arrange a less severe fate for him? You wouldn't have argued that he was mad, just to keep him alive for study?"

"No," Kreizler answered. "But I intended to remove him from immediate danger, and then to plead for a life sentence rather than the electrical chair or the gallows. It had occurred to me some time ago that his observation of our efforts, his letter, even his murder of the boy Joseph, all indicated a desire to communicate with us. And when he began to answer my questions tonight, I knew that I'd found something I'd never really come across before—a man who murdered apparent strangers and was willing to talk about his crimes." Kreizler sighed again and held up his hands weakly. "We've lost a tremendous opportunity. Such men will seldom do that, you see—discuss their behavior. They're reluctant to admit their deeds after capture, and even if they do, they won't discuss the intimate details. They don't

seem to know how. Look at Beecham's last words—he'd never been able to say just what it was that made him kill. But I believe I could have helped him find words for it, in time."

I studied my friend carefully. "You know that they wouldn't have let you." Kreizler shrugged obstinately, unwilling to concede the point. "With the political dimension this thing was assuming?" I went on. "He'd have had one of the fastest trials in recent memory, and been strung up in a matter of weeks."

"Perhaps," Kreizler said. "We'll never know, now. Ah, Moore—there are so *many* things that we'll never know, now…"

"Will you at least allow yourself credit for finding the man? That's a fairly amazing feat on its own, damn it all."

Laszlo shrugged again. "Is it? I wonder. How long would he have stayed hidden from us, John?"

"How long? Well, a good long time, I suppose—hell, he'd been at it for years."

"Yes," Kreizler answered, "but how much *longer*? The crisis was inevitable—he couldn't go forever without society being aware of him. He wanted that, wanted it desperately. If the average person were to describe John Beecham in light of his murders, he'd say he was a social outcast, but nothing could be more superficial, or more untrue. Beecham could never have turned his back on human society, nor society on him, and why? Because he was—perversely, perhaps, but utterly—tied to that society. He was its offspring, its sick conscience—a living reminder of all the hidden crimes we commit when we close ranks to live among each other. He craved human society, craved the chance to show people what their 'society' had done to him. And the odd thing is, society craved him, too."

"Craved him?" I said, as we passed along the quiet perimeter of Washington Square Park. "How do you mean? They'd have shot him through with electricity if they'd had the chance."

"Yes, but not before holding him up to the world," Kreizler answered. "We revel in men like Beecham, Moore—they are the easy repositories of all that is dark in our very *social* world. But the things that helped make Beecham what he was? Those, we tolerate. Those, we even enjoy…"

As Kreizler's gaze drifted away again, the calash rolled to a slow

stop outside my grandmother's house. The sky was only beginning to glow in the east, but there was already a light on in the upper floors of Number 19 Washington Square. As Kreizler turned his head to take in the streets around him, he caught sight of that light, and it brought the first small smile of the morning to his face.

"How has your grandmother felt about your involvement in a murder case. Moore?" he asked. "She always took a lively interest in the macabre."

"I haven't told her," I answered. "She simply thinks that my gambling habit has gotten worse. And, all things considered, I'm going to let her keep thinking that." I got to the sidewalk with a stiff little jump. "So—we're to be at Del's tonight, I understand?"

Kreizler nodded once. "It seems appropriate, eh?"

"Absolutely," I said. "I'm going to call Charlie—have him tell Ranhofer to lay something really exceptional on. We deserve that much, anyway."

Kreizler's smile widened just a bit. "Indeed, Moore," he said, closing the calash door and offering his hand. I shook it, and then Laszlo faced front with a small groan. "All right, Stevie."

The boy turned and saluted to me, and then the carriage kept rolling on toward Fifth Avenue.

CHAPTER 47

Almost twenty-four hours later, as I was stumbling home after a meal at Delmonico's that would have slowed down a regiment of cavalry *and* their horses, I stopped at the Fifth Avenue Hotel to buy an early edition of the Tuesday *Times*. Walking on down the avenue as I scanned the paper, I found myself once more under the watchful eye of Colonel Waring's helmeted young street cleaners, who were just waiting for me to drop some shred of newsprint. I ignored them, however, and continued my search, finally locating what I was looking for in the bottom right-hand corner of the front page.

That morning the custodian at the Bellevue morgue had made a gruesome discovery. Wrapped in a tarp and deposited near the back door of the building was the body of a muscular adult male who in life had stood over six feet tall. Because the body was not clothed, there were no identifying documents to be found. A single bullet wound to the chest was the apparent cause of death; but the body had sustained further damage, as well. Specifically, the top of the skull had been removed and the brain apparently dissected in a way that, the morgue staff said, indicated an expert hand. A brief note had been found pinned to the tarp, claiming that this was the body of the man responsible for the boy-whore murders—or, as the *Times* put it, "the deaths of the several forlorn young boys known to have been in the employ of houses too sordid to be mentioned in these pages." Inquiries made of Commissioner Roosevelt (whom I'd spoken to that afternoon by telephone) had confirmed that the murderer had indeed been killed while trying to continue his horrifying work. For various important but unexplained reasons, the commissioner said, he was not at liberty to reveal either the killer's name or any details of his death; but the public should know that members of the Division of Detectives had been involved, and that the case was most decidedly closed.

On finishing the story I looked around the avenue and gave out with a long, satisfying holler.

I can still feel that sense of relish as I look back across almost twenty-three years. Kreizler and I are old men now, and New York is a very different place—as J. P. Morgan told us the night we visited him in his Black Library, the city, like the country generally, was on the verge of a tumultuous metamorphosis in 1896. Thanks to Theodore and many of his political allies, we have been transformed into a great power, and New York is more than ever the crossroads of the world. The crime and corruption that are still the firm foundations of city life have taken on ever more businesslike trappings—Paul Kelly, for example, has gone on to become an important leader of organized labor. True, children still die at the hands of depraved adults while plying the skin trade, and unidentified bodies are occasionally found in peculiar places; but to the best of my knowledge, a menace of John Beecham's stripe has not been seen again in this city. It is my abiding hope that such creatures do not appear very often; Kreizler, of course, suspects that such faith is utterly self-deluding.

I've seen a great deal of Lucius and Marcus Isaacson during the last twenty-three years, and even more of Sara; all of them have pursued their careers in criminal detection with single-minded devotion and brilliant results. There have even been occasions when we've had cause to investigate some little matter together, undertakings that collectively form the chain of my most memorable experiences. But nothing, I suppose, will ever be quite like the hunt for Beecham. Perhaps with Roosevelt's passing, that achievement will finally gain public appreciation; if nothing else, it serves as a singular reminder that, beneath all his theatrical bluster, Theodore possessed a heart and a mind expansive enough to have made such an unprecedented undertaking possible.

Oh, and a note to those who may be curious about the fates of Cyrus Montrose and Stevie Taggert: Cyrus eventually married, and brought his wife to work for Kreizler. The couple have several children, one of whom is currently enrolled at the Harvard Medical School. As for young Stevie, on attaining adulthood he borrowed some money from Kreizler and opened a tobacconist's shop across the street from the Fifth Avenue Hotel, in the new Flatiron Building. He's done well, and in the past fifteen years I don't think I've ever seen him without a cigarette in his mouth.

Just three years after the Beecham case, the Croton Reservoir—having been outmoded by a new water system constructed after Boss

Platt consummated his Greater New York scheme—was demolished to make room for the main headquarters of that most marvelous of all philanthropical endeavors, the New York Public Library. Having seen a notice in the *Times* announcing the demolition, I went over to take a look at the work during my lunch hour one day. The task of tearing the reservoir down had begun at the southern wall, on top of which we had faced the final challenge of our investigation, and which was now being knocked away to expose an enormous man-made crater one block wide and two blocks long. The structure didn't look like much, all laid open to view that way; it was hard to believe that it had ever been strong enough to withstand the fantastic pressure exerted by millions of gallons of water.

Afterword to the New Edition

Like most wonderful and terrible things, *The Alienist* was never supposed to happen.

In the early 1990s, I was a military and diplomatic historian whose ideas on both subjects were too extreme to guarantee regular employment. My last two books—a history of American security policy and a biography of a key but overlooked nineteenth-century American mercenary—had received good reviews, but said reviews had not translated into appreciable sales. Even the articles I wrote for historical journals seemed to inspire controversy, while one piece that I wrote for *The New York Times Book Review* that dared to question the genius of the generals who ran America's Civil War inspired more hate mail than any single item in that publication's long history.

And if what I had to say about the past was objectionable, my feelings about the present, the future, and such things as the possibility of a cataclysmic attack on the United States by obscure people and organizations around the world were worrisome enough that it was often hard to get even close associates to publish them.

Such being the case, I began to think about writing fiction, affecting to tell anyone who was interested that my mind could no longer be constrained by mere facts. I had published a novel (what stunk) right after college, and I knew at least that it's smart policy, if you're a writer or would-be writer looking for a subject, to try to imagine a book that you yourself would like to read but can't find. A lifelong interest in crime and the formation of the mind had led me to decide on a psychological thriller, but my grounding in nonfiction would not allow me to be anything but rigorous in my research and approach. This, I soon realized, could get tricky: How do you devise a story that includes the kind of hard science I'd nosed around in without making

readers and audiences want to drive ice picks through their own eyes?

I'm not sure just when the idea of focusing on two men—both from abusive backgrounds, one of whom becomes a murderer, the other a hunter of such murderers—came to me. Perhaps it had always been there; perhaps it had been my original method of reconciling the furiously different sides of what had once been my bright but violently angry young self. Whatever the case, the most pressing need was to know why people of such seemingly similar backgrounds could turn out so differently. This was (and remains) the point at which, for my money, most psychological thrillers went wrong: They're not really psychological investigations at all, but conventionally crafted whodunits, what I call narrative crossword puzzles.

From the first, I was, like most authors, interested in creating something different: in my case, a "whydunit," a story that could raise hackles even and especially if you knew who the killer was from early on. What I wanted to do was illustrate critical personal moments in a life (or lives) that steadily build and reinforce character and thus become the building blocks of action, rather than trying to spin another variation on the old Aristotelian dynamic of action leading to character. (For if we have learned anything from modern movies, surely it is that action is not *necessarily* character.) As I conducted my search for illustrative formative events, it occurred to me that I might also echo those same elements of personality and experience in my two main characters' surroundings.

Being a student of Henry Adams, that grandson and great grandson of presidents who was a prodigious early force in developing a rigorous, scholarly brand of American history, I had long since accepted his central notion that nations, like people, have characters, and that determining those collective identities and behaviors is the most difficult yet most important job of the historian. As I began to look for turning points in the histories of my two main characters, it occurred to me that I might set the tale not in the present but at that point in American history when psychology first evolved far enough from its parent discipline, philosophy, to stand on its own and address *dynamic* (that is, conscious and voluntary) patterns of human behavior, in addition to merely *functional* (autonomic and reactive) motivations and actions. In short, the key to making the story unique might be the same discipline that had, in various forms, been my life's work: history.

It would all depend on finding a moment—not simply a moment in the past into which it might be nifty or quaint to plop a psychological

investigator down (that had already been done, wistfully, sometimes well, but in all cases anachronistically, in examples ranging from ancient Rome to medieval England), but rather when actual scientific advances would make it genuinely plausible for such an investigator to exist. How far back in American history could I go and still be able to accurately use even the rudiments of forensic psychology in action and dialogue?

It was at this point that happy coincidences, those partners of any lucky historical novelist, began to appear. It was clear that the earliest I could shoot for in terms of the scientific roots of the tale would be the period during which William James established his psychological laboratory, the first in the United States, at Harvard: the 1870s. True, there had been alienists and other American mental specialists before then, but they were, to a very large extent, rogues, each the advocate of his own system. As a result, none of them had been taught systematically (if they had been taught at all): The academic terrain was conceded to the great German pioneers.

James changed all this, not because he was interested in legal or criminal psychology (he wasn't; indeed, he was troubled by attempts to take psychological principles so far out of the functional world and into such a dynamic and behavioral world as crime), but because his influence was so universal. You simply could not be a true psychologist in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century without having processed James, without having read and decided where you stood on his *Principles of Psychology,* the almost unbelievably massive text that was the first truly comprehensive American work of its kind.

I was already inclined to set my story in the city in which I'd been born and grown up, New York, largely because I wanted to help immortalize those ever-threatened parts of the town (was there ever so abused a law as the National Historic Preservation Act, or, more familiarly, the Landmarks Act, of 1966?) that were left, and to do the same for the brief but important period during the 1890s when Theodore Roosevelt (the American leader who has always fascinated me most) was president of the city's board of police commissioners. Immersed in the facts of TR's life as I had been in my youth, I figured that there was a good chance that he'd been an undergraduate at Harvard when James had started his psychology laboratory there; but, in the event, my luck was even better than mere coincidence of timing. Roosevelt had actually studied *under* James—not psychology, true, but comparative anatomy. Which meant that the two main human agents of the historical forces that I wanted to portray (psychology's advance into the dynamic realm and modern

criminological evolution in New York City) could be located in one place and time as backstory, and thus portrayed as personal acquaintances, crossing paths at regular intervals.

All I needed were several fictional characters to fill out the other aspects of the same historical forces and to place them in one historical stewpot, and I'd be under way. Thus were born John Schuyler Moore and Laszlo Kreizler: Moore, the boyhood friend of and fellow Harvard undergraduate to Theodore Roosevelt, and Kreizler, the foreign-born protagonist of the tale as well as the talented but troubled protégé of the great James. Each of them was a conduit into an important world: Moore, as a crime reporter and reprobate, into the city's nefarious underbelly, and Kreizler, as a crusading alienist, into the madhouses, prisons, and ghettos. Other, subsidiary characters followed: Sara Howard, the aspiring female detective; the Isaacson brothers, masters of the new forensic science; Stevie Taggert and Cyrus Montrose, Kreizler's left and right hands in dealing with the city's seamier sides. All were fleshed out until my investigation of early criminology and aberrant psychology had a skeleton, a brain, and a spinal column that were historically, scientifically, and (I hoped) emotionally plausible.

The whole thing struck me as exciting, but, as has been noted, that didn't necessarily count for much, commercially; and I knew that, no matter how intriguing the idea might be, my editor, Ann Godoff, was still in no mood to let me jump over from nonfiction to fiction. And my agent, Suzanne Gluck, was dubious, too. I needed a plan—that is, *another* plan, and just as devious as, if less elaborate than, that of the novel….

We did not yet live, then, in the full-blown Information Age, when things like forgery were to become household amusements, to be carried out on laptop computers. But imagination could be made to compensate for that lack, and my own imagination was by now working overtime. Laboring long but exciting hours on one of those old, original IBM PCs, those desktop tanks with kryptonite-green screens whose "graphics" didn't extend beyond some very rudimentary vector configurations, it is perhaps understandable that my plotting mind turned positively fiendish. I decided to give my agent and editor just what they wanted: a rollicking nonfiction tale. I would present my story to them as actual history, at least at first; then, when I had them hooked, I would reveal the truth—and hope that the resulting screaming did not actually eject me from their respective offices.

As I say, such schemes were far harder to pull off in those days, and I'm not so sure it's a good thing that they've since become so easy. The plan that I'd formulated would require all sorts of phony printed matter, of course, but none of that presented the difficulty of what I was sure would be the thing that would seal the deal: a false visual. To be specific, a simple photograph, "taken" in the first decade of the twentieth century, showing Dr. Laszlo Kreizler visiting Theodore Roosevelt in the White House, years after their shared adventure of pursuing a serial killer in New York City through the unique method of using the latest psychological insights.

Of course, nowadays you can run outside, grab almost any nine-year-old by the ear, slip him twenty bucks, and have him whip you up just such a cut-and-paste Photoshop-finished job in a small fraction of the time it'd take you to explain to him who the hell Theodore Roosevelt was: Thank you, Bill Gates. But back then, I had to do the whole thing by hand: Go through volume after volume of old portraits to find a photo of someone who might resemble Kreizler a little later in his life (it ended up being the composer Edvard Grieg), make sure the scale and lighting fit a picture of TR at his presidential desk that I'd already selected, photocopy (*not* at home) enough prints to allow me to cut and paste, try and fail, try and fail…and then, when I thought I had it, photocopy (*not* at home) the glued-together creation with its phony caption and see how it came off.

By today's standards, it's primitive, as you will see at the conclusion of this afterword; but by the standards of 1992, I don't mind saying, it was diabolical genius. When I had the proposal assembled, I tried it first on my agent, Suzanne, who reacted perfectly: She was thrilled with the idea, and thought it would make a great volume of popular history. Then I delivered the news that I wanted to do it in novelized form.

Why? she wanted to know. Wasn't there enough original research material?

Uh—not exactly…

Suzanne took the revelation of the ruse well, but the news that I wanted to pull the same hoax on my editor brought a long pause. Ann Godoff was destined to become one of the great forces in modern publishing over the next decade, but even in 1992 she could be—quietly formidable might be the best way to put it. Putting an amusing professional ruse over on Ann was not, in short, a game for pikers: I would have to be sure, Suzanne told me, of what it might do to Ann's

overall assessment of my seriousness as an author. I was, said I, but if it was the only way to get her to consider letting me do fiction, and especially *this* fiction, I was ready.

The proposal was delivered; Ann studied it; Suzanne and I went to her midtown office for the fateful meeting. The high quality of the story was conceded; and then I informed Ann that I wanted to tell it in novel form. She became concerned. Why in God's name would I make such a decision? Wasn't there (I'd had practice, on this one) enough primary research material? Were the familial descendants not cooperating? Was—

At last, the truth had to be told, again: There *was* no other way to write it. Because I'd made the whole story up.

Stoically, Ann sat for several minutes; then she slammed her hand down—hard—on her desk and declared, "God damn it! Nobody's *ever* fooled me!"

Well, said I nervously, didn't that prove what an unprecedentedly plausible book the story would make?

There were a few more nervous minutes, during which I received a critical gaze appropriate to my last remark; and then, as it would so often in the future, Ann's courage shone through, and the deal was struck. The rest was up to me.

And to my readers, to whom I will add just one last note: The initial enthusiasm and support with which this book was greeted were, of course, beyond my capacity to understand or to ever fully acknowledge. But the fact that both *The Alienist* and its sequel, *The Angel of Darkness,* have hung on—or rather, the fact that you have *made* them hang on—to become standards in the worlds of mystery and historical fiction is really something beyond any author's imagining. It is the kind of reaction in the hope of which writers keep writing, and which allows them to endure (with varying levels of grace) all those ancillary demons that notoriety breeds. But the relationship between book, readers, and author should always be clear, and always be pure: For me, such has been the case from the start. That I should have occasion to write an afterword to an edition such as this is, if nothing else, testament to that fact.

C.C.

Cherry Plain, New York

April 2006



Shortly after Theodore Roosevelt became president, he had a visit from Dr. Laszlo Kreizler, who came to plead the cause of better care for "the most disenfranchised": children and the insane. TR found Kreizler's hair, graying prematurely in 1895, quite white in 1901; but his manner was still the same. "He remains by turns brusque and courteous, moody and warm," Roosevelt wrote after the meeting, "and he still talks in spirited fashion about his views on the formation of the human psyche. His theories, like the man himself, retain their odd quality of being at once unsettling and incomprehensible. Yet for the sake of our friendship, and of the noble work he has done, I shall always listen." Kreizler wrote after TR's death in 1919, "Theodore had a child's capacity to create great good, great foolishness, and only occasional harm. It is popularly said that 'the world' will miss him; certainly I shall."

Acknowledgments

While doing the preliminary research for this book, it occurred to me that the phenomenon we now call serial killing has been with us for as long as humans have gathered together into societies. This amateur opinion was confirmed, and paths of deeper research were indicated, by Dr. David Abrahamsen, one of America's foremost experts on violence in general and serial killing in particular. Dr. Abrahamsen passed away in 2002, leaving behind a daunting legacy of fearless and pioneering work; and as I have had no chance to properly acknowledge my debt to and affection for him, I have elected to dedicate this edition, in part, to his memory. Along with the loyalty of its readers, *The Alienist* ultimately owed its success to his intellectual guidance. He was truly a man who understood how to maintain the vigor of youth through the rigors of age.

The staffs of the Harvard Archives, the New York Public Library, the New-York Historical Society, the American Museum of Natural History, and the New York Society Library all lent invaluable assistance.

John Coston suggested several important avenues of research early on, and took the time to trade ideas. I am grateful.

Many authors contributed unknowingly to this story through their nonfiction accounts of serial killing and killers, and out of these many I cannot fail to offer thanks to: Colin Wilson, for his encyclopedic histories of crime; Janet Colaizzi, for her brilliant study of homicidal insanity since 1800; Harold Schechter, for his examination of the infamous Albert Fish (whose notorious note to Grace Budd's mother inspired John Beecham's similar document); Joel Norris, for his justly famous treatise on serial killers; Robert K. Ressler, for his memoir of a life spent chasing such characters; and again, Dr. Abrahamsen, for his

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I would also like to thank my family, in particular my cousins, Maria and William von Hartz.

A personal note to those who found the quote from John Ray in the original dedication to this book either arcane or, apparently, untenable: Its "secret" (not so very secret after all) was and remains *loyalty*. It's been my luck to know so many people, some of whom are listed above, who could grasp this essential notion; and it has saddened me beyond measure to have encountered others who found it a puzzle too complex to unravel.

Finally, for their thoughtfulness in publishing this edition, with its clarifications and afterword, I would like to thank Gina Centrello, Jennifer Hershey, Laura Ford, Caitlin Newman, and Evan Camfield.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bestselling and critically acclaimed author Caleb Carr's books include *The Angel of Darkness, The Lessons of Terror, Killing Time, The Devil Soldier,* and *The Italian Secretary*. His titles have been translated into twenty languages worldwide. A contributing editor to *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History* and the series editor of the Modern Library War Series, he lives in upstate New York and teaches at Bard College.

ALSO BY CALEB CARR

The Italian Secretary

The Lessons of Terror

Killing Time

The Angel of Darkness

The Devil Soldier

America Invulnerable (with James Chace)

Casing the Promised Land

Praise for

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“Mesmerizing.”

—*Detroit Free Press*

“Remarkable…The reader is taken on a whirlwind tour of the Gilded Age metropolis, climbing up tenement stairs, scrambling across rooftops, and witnessing midnight autopsies…. A breathtaking, finely crafted mystery.”

—*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

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